

## INTERMEDIATE ACTIVITY REPORT October 2022 – February 2023

### 1. MEMBERS

In 2022, AREPO received 29 membership fees.

AREPO currently represents 34 Regions from 8 different Member States. The French region Grand-Est joined AREPO as observer in October 2022.

### 2. EUROPEAN POLICIES

#### 2.1 EU QUALITY POLICY

Based on the outcome of the discussions within the **technical working group on the GI revision** set up during summer 2022, made up of experts from its member regions and members of its Scientific Committee, AREPO was able to **draft a [text with 50 amendments' proposals](#)** to contribute to the legislative process. **Many of AREPO amendments were included by rapporteur De Castro in his report (24 out of 50), while 32 of the 122 amendments presented by MEP De Castro were inspired at least in part by our proposals.**

Following the presentation of the De Castro report, [AREPO presented further amendments in November 2022](#), many of which have been tabled by other MEPs of the Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament (Agri Committee).

[About 800 amendments have been presented in the Agri Committee](#). The rapporteur is confident that in spring 2023, MEPs will vote on the European Parliament's (EP) position in order to start the trilogues in summer and conclude the legislative process with the Council of the European Union under the Spanish Presidency in October/November 2023.

The legislative process on the EP side involves as well the Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI), which has shared competences on this dossier concerning the role of the EUIPO and the aspects related to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). As a consequence, JURI Committee also tabled amendments.

In November 2022, [AREPO presented its set of amendments to the JURI report](#). Despite sharing the intention to clarify the role of EUIPO within the main regulation rather than through delegated acts, **a major difference in position remains on the role of EUIPO**. As a matter of fact, JURI committee is very much in favour of an EUIPO involvement in the management of the system and the analysis of product specifications, as proposed for non-agricultural GIs. [JURI approved its position at the end of January 2023](#).

Throughout 2022, AREPO worked as an expert for the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) on the GI revision, supporting the CoR rapporteur, **Ms Karine Gloanec Maurin** (President of the Communauté de communes des Collines du Perche, First Deputy Mayor of Couëtron au Perche and Regional Councillor for Europe and International Economic Development - Centre-Val de Loire Region). [This opinion was unanimously approved by the CoR plenary at the end of November 2022](#).

Furthermore, on the side of the Council of the European Union, the Swedish rotating Presidency presented a [document setting out three possible policy options](#) regarding the role that the EUIPO would play on GIs. AREPO, together with CEVI, Copa Cogeca, EFOR and origIn EU, sent a joint letter to the Permanent Representations of the EU Member States, asking to support policy option 2 (EUIPO is to handle only administrative tasks).

#### 2.2 FARM 2 FORK STRATEGY

##### 2.2.1 FRONT-OF-PACK NUTRITION LABELLING (FOPNL)

A proposal for the revision of the regulation on the food information provided to consumers, which includes a proposal for a FOPNL, was expected to be published at the beginning of 2023, following several postponements. However, it seems that the Commission will postpone its proposal again to autumn 2023. Considering that the elections of the new European Parliament will take place in 2024, there are very few chances that this proposal will be discussed and approved during the current legislature.

On November 30<sup>th</sup> 2022, Fifteen European Regions from Italy, Greece, Spain, France, Finland, Portugal, together with AREPO, held an event on nutrition labelling at the European Parliament hosted by MEP Paolo De Castro. The event aimed at discussing with MEPs, regional ministers, stakeholders and researchers the approaches the new FOPNL European legislation should consider to fulfil the expectation of informing rather than influencing consumer choices for a healthy and balanced diet. [Click here to read more.](#)

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### 2.3 PROMOTION POLICY

AREPO regularly participates in the Civil Dialogue Group of DG AGRI on promotion, as well as in **the Infoday on the promotion programme** ([click here to see the presentations of the 2023 virtual event](#)), in order to update its members. Moreover, every year AREPO updates and shares with members the [descriptive note on promotion policy](#).

Furthermore, in November 2022, AREPO and other 16 organisations representing the agro-food sector, sent a [joint letter to Commissioner for Agriculture](#), Mr Janusz Wojciechowski, asking the following:

- 1) An inclusive 2023 Annual Work Programme (AWP) that does not discriminate against any type of EU agricultural product or sector and includes red and processed meat and alcohol drinks in the list of products eligible for funding;
- 2) The rapid publication of the Commission proposal for the revision of Regulation 1144/2014 on the Promotion of EU agricultural products.

AREPO also continues monitoring the process of revision of EU Promotion Policy ([Click here to consult the position submitted to the related public consultation](#)). The legislative proposal was expected to be published in June 2022; however, it hasn't been published yet, due to a lack of agreement inside the Commission concerning the list of products to be excluded from promotion (notably red meat and wine). As a result, AREPO together with other 16 organisations representing the agro-food sector, [sent a joint letter to Mr Frans Timmermans](#), Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, **and Mr Janusz Wojciechowski**, Commissioner for Agriculture, expressing their concerns over the delay in the publication of the EC proposal on the revision of EU Promotion Policy and urging the Commission for its rapid publication.

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### 2.4 NON-AGRICULTURAL GIS

For several years AREPO has been following the developments at EU level in the field of non-agricultural GIs, calling for their recognition and laying stress on the importance for all GIs to be protected. In this framework, AREPO has been collaborating with the **French Association of Industrial and Artisanal Geographical Indications (AFIGIA)**, by supporting the setting of a lobbying strategy at EU level to put forward the demands of the sector in front of EU Institutions. This cooperation was further consolidated through a partnership agreement, [making AFIGIA one of AREPO associated members](#).

A [legislative proposal](#) was published on 13 April 2022. AREPO services shared an [analysis](#) with the AREPO members.

We are currently monitoring the [development of the legislative process](#), relying on the work done by AFIGIA and supporting their actions.

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## 3. SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

The Scientific Council has welcomed new academics and researchers from research centres and universities situated in some of our member regions in Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, as well as experts in the field of Geographical Indications and Intellectual property coming from non-member regions or countries not represented within AREPO (Austria, England).

Members of the steering body of the Scientific Council, the AREPO Scientific Committee, contributed to the meetings of the working group on the GI revision.

Click here to read the detailed [description of the structure of AREPO Scientific Council](#).

## 4. COOPERATION WITH EU INSTITUTIONS

### 4.1 EUROPEAN COMMISSION

AREPO is member in **3 Civil Dialogue Groups of DG AGRI**: "Quality and Promotion" (2 seats), "Organic Farming" (2 seats) and "Rural Development" (1 seat). This is one of AREPO's strengths and shows the recognition of its legitimacy by the EC.

The functioning of the Civil Dialogue Groups has been revised. **The groups have been reduced to 7 and only one expert from each organisation will sit in the chosen group.**

The Commission published a new call for applications for the CDG at the end of 2022.

**AREPO has currently been re-selected as a member of the Civil Dialogue Group on Quality and Promotion.**

AREPO has also submitted its candidature for the CDG "Organic Farming" and for the CDG "CAP Strategic Plans and Horizontal Matters". As the application period for these groups has been extended, **the outcome of the selection process is still awaited.**

AREPO participated in the **Civil Society Dialogue of DG TRADE** to monitor the evolution of bilateral free trade agreements, with particular attention to the protection of GIs.

AREPO has been regularly invited to high-level conferences of DG AGRI. Furthermore, Commissioner for Agriculture, **Mr Janusz Wojciechowski**, confirmed his participation in the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the European Event on Quality and Origin Products organised by AREPO, in the framework of the AGROSMARTglobal project.

### 4.2 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament reacts positively to our demands.

AREPO has established solid relations with several MEPs of the AGRI Committee sensitive to the topic of quality (Clara Aguilera, Eric Andrieu, Isabel Carvalhais, Paolo De Castro, Jérémy Decerle, Herbert Dorfmann, Martin Häusling, Norbert Lins, Irène Tolleret).

Proof of this solid relationship is the objectives achieved in the complex process of CAP reform, where many of our proposals for amendments have been tabled by MEPs and contributed to the formulation of the final text ([consult here AREPO analysis of the final text](#)).

More recently, AREPO has developed further relations with MEPs that are working on the legislative proposal on GIs in order to identify areas of common work and table AREPO amendments' proposals. **Many of AREPO amendments were included by rapporteur De Castro in his report (24 out of 50), while 32 of the 122 amendments presented by MEP De Castro were inspired at least in part by our proposals.**

Following the presentation of the De Castro report, [AREPO presented further amendments in November 2022](#), many of which have been tabled by other MEPs of the Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament (Agri Committee).

**MEP Paolo De Castro** (S&D) will participate in the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the European Event on Quality and Origin Products organised by AREPO, in the framework of the AGROSMARTglobal project.

Furthermore, AREPO is a member of the **Intergroup on wines, alcoholic beverages and quality food**, chaired by MEP **Irène Tolleret** (Renew Europe). In the meeting of the intergroup held on 5 October 2022, to discuss the revision of the EU GI system, AREPO Secretary General, Mr Laurent Gomez took the floor to remind AREPO position and priorities on the revision.

Last, since February 2020, the **'Linking the Levels' Unit (LINK) at the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) of the European Parliament**, recognised AREPO as a well-established European Association and showed interest in cooperating with us. This unit, recently created for bringing together the local, regional, national and European levels of decision-making in Europe, aims to contribute to better EU law making.

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#### 4.3 EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

AREPO is often involved in contributing to the work of the NAT Commission of the Committee of the Regions, providing its expertise on several topics.

Specifically, AREPO Policy officers worked as experts to support the CoR rapporteur, **Mr Uroš Brežan** (currently Minister for environment and space of the Republic of Slovenia), in the drafting of its opinion on the EU action plan for organic farming. The opinion was adopted by the 147<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions in December 2021.

Furthermore, following the publication of the EC proposal for a regulation on GI revision, AREPO Policy Officers have been appointed as expert, supporting the CoR rapporteur for the opinion on the revision of the EU GI system, **Ms Karine Gloanec-Maurin**. Particularly, AREPO supported the rapporteur during meeting with other institutional actors and stakeholders, and elaborated the draft opinion working out amendment proposals and policy recommendation on the text of the European Commission, based on AREPO internal work and the interaction with other GI stakeholder at EU level. [This opinion was unanimously approved by the CoR plenary at the end of November 2022.](#)

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#### 4.4 EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

AREPO is often invited to contribute with its expertise to the work of some groups of the European Economic and Social Committee.

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#### 4.5 EUIPO

Despite defending its position on the management of the EU GI system, AREPO has remained open to meet and cooperate with EUIPO.

With the aim to understand and discuss the competences that EUIPO has developed on GIs as well as its relation with DG AGRI of the European Commission, **AREPO set up a technical group which met EUIPO on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2022 during a Zoom webinar** ([click here to read the report of the meeting](#)).

On March 31<sup>st</sup>, AREPO President, **Ms Begoña García Bernal**, had a meeting with EUIPO Executive Director, **Mr Christian Archambeau**, to discuss the concerns raised by AREPO on the involvement of EUIPO in the management of the EU GI system.

On 31 May 2022, AREPO was invited as speaker in the webinar [The Use of Geographical Indications when GI-Protected Products are Ingredients](#), organised in the framework of the [carlPI project](#), funded under the 11th European Development Fund and implemented by EUIPO. Click here to [download the presentation](#). Click here to watch the [recording of the webinar](#).

Over the summer 2022, AREPO was invited to participate in the stakeholder public consultation concerning the update of the 2023 Guidelines on Trade Mark Practice and Guidelines on Designs Practice.

Moreover, at the beginning of October 2022, AREPO accompanied the rapporteur for the Committee of the Regions on a visit to Alicante.

Finally, Ms Katarina Kompari, IP legal specialist at EUIPO, will take part in the conference organised in the framework of the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the European Event on Quality and Origin Products.

## 5. COOPERATION WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

**AREFLH:** cooperation on promotion policy and on the Farm 2 Fork strategy.

**Agiregions:** support to the maintenance of the role of Regions as managing authorities in CAP Strategic Plans and cooperation on the Farm 2 Fork strategy.

**Qualivita:** cooperation for the promotion of new Geographical Indications.

**oriGIn:** collaboration on the development of sustainable strategies and tools for GIs. Collaboration in order to defend together geographical indications at EU level, adopting a common position and lobbying strategy concerning the CAP and cooperating on the GI review. In addition, collaboration on the proposals for the Annual Work Programme and the revision of Promotion Policy.

**AREV:** collaboration on the GI review.

**EFOW:** collaboration on sustainability and the GI review, collaboration on the proposals for the Annual Work Programme and the revision of Promotion Policy.

**Copa-Cogeca:** collaboration on the GI review and on the proposals for the Annual Work Programme and the revision of Promotion Policy.

**European Countryside Movement (MER):** collaboration and exchange of information on the Intergroup on Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas ([RUMRA](#)).

**Euromontana:** exchange and collaboration concerning the optional quality term “mountain product”. Collaboration on the response to the EC public consultation on Promotion policy. Collaboration in the framework of two EU projects.

**Eurofoiegras:** cooperation and support in the consultation on marketing standards.

**AFIGIA:** cooperation in the field of non-agricultural GIs and support in the setting of a lobbying strategy at EU level in order to put forward the demands of this sector in front of EU Institutions.

**IFOAM:** cooperation in the field of organic farming.

## 6. AREPO EVENTS

- [FRONT-OF-PACK NUTRITION LABELLING: WHICH IS THE BEST APPROACH?](#) (30 November 2022, European Parliament, Brussels): Fifteen European Regions from Italy, Greece, Spain, France, Finland, Portugal, together with AREPO, held an event on nutrition labelling at the European Parliament hosted by MEP Paolo De Castro. The event aimed at discussing with MEPs, regional ministers, stakeholders and researchers the approaches the new FOPNL European legislation should consider to fulfil the expectation of informing rather than influencing consumer choices for a healthy and balanced diet.
- [Second EU Multi-Actor Platform webinar on “European Quality Schemes: the added value for mountain value chains”](#), organised in the framework of MOVING project (8 November 2022, online): AREPO presented its position and policy recommendations on the European Commission proposal on the revision of EU GIs.

## 7. OTHER WEBINARS AND CONFERENCES

- [European Rural Network Assembly](#) (5 October 2022)
- [EU CAP Network Launch Event](#) (6 October 2022)
- **BuyFood Toscana**, (21 October 2022)
- [The 2022 EU Agricultural Outlook conference](#) (8-9 December 2022, Brussels and online)

- [Infoday on Promotion Policy](#) (1-2 February 2023, Brussels and online)
- **Round table on the Revision of the EU Geographical Indication Policy** (7 February, European Parliament, Brussels): organised by oriGIn EU to discuss the recent developments of the EU GIs system reform.

## 8. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Since November 2019, AREPO team has been working on setting a new communication strategy in order to find multiple tools to communicate with and reach its members as well as to better promote the activities carried out. This strategy included the **revision of the website and a better engagement on social media**.

**AREPO WEBSITE:** A new website was published **online in April 2022**. A more catchy and dynamic graphic design for a more user-friendly site where members could stay up to date and find all the news concerning AREPO activities and the EU policies followed, as well as being able to share it on social networks. We also created a section dedicated to a series of tools for GIs where you will find:

- **AREPO publications and studies;**
- **Bibliography on studies on Geographical Indications** and related issues;
- **Map on training offers of universities of our member regions**, providing courses entirely dedicated to geographical indications and quality schemes;
- Existing databases related to GIs and EU quality schemes.

**AREPO SOCIAL MEDIA:** AREPO social media give priorities to news on GIs and EU quality policy, as well as on EU agricultural policy and all related issues. These channels are also used to promote our activities among our members and towards outsiders. In general, good engagement rate on social media. Interactions with EU Institutions accounts on social media, especially with DG AGRI and some of its representatives on Twitter. However, it should be recalled that AREPO's actions generally target a very specific audience, which is not the general public.

- [Facebook](#): 684 Likes; 733 Followers.
- [Twitter](#): 287 Followers.
- [LinkedIn](#): 541 Followers.

### AREPO IN THE PRESS:

- [Euronews](#), the multilingual pan-European television channel for international news contacted AREPO for interviewing the President, Ms Begoña García Bernal, on the danger of climate change for some denominations of origin. [Click here to watch the interview](#) (currently available only in Spanish).
- [Capital](#), French TV show in prime time on a major channel (M6), covered the nutrition labelling event held in PE on 30 November 2022. [Click here to watch it](#).

## 9. EUROPEAN PROJECTS

### ONGOING

#### 9.1 AGROSMARTglobal (PRIORITY AXIS 2 OF THE INTERREG SUDOE PROGRAMME 2014-2020)



The [AGROSMARTglobal project "Space for the competitiveness, promotion and intelligent international expansion of agri-food cooperatives in the Sudoe rural areas"](#) is a 3.5-year project (October 2019 - March 2023) involving 10 partners from France, Spain and Portugal and coordinated by the Union of agri-food cooperatives of Galicia (AGACA), Spain. The project is co-financed by the [Interreg Sudoe Programme 2014-2020](#) under Priority Axis 2: Promoting the competitiveness and internationalisation of the SMEs of Southwest Europe (Sudoe).



The overall objective of AGROSMARTglobal is to contribute to **alleviate the difficulties faced by rural areas in Southwest Europe** and to promote their economic development by finding efficient transnational solutions to improve the competitiveness and the internationalisation of their agri-food cooperatives.

To achieve this objective, the AGROSMARTglobal project has chosen to consolidate the [space for promotion, inter-cooperation and competitiveness of agri-food cooperatives in Sudoe](#) (launched during the [AGROSMARTcoop](#) project) by developing advanced support tools and services to strengthen their positioning and internationalisation through the **implementation of digital marketing strategies** that rely on inter-company cooperation.

AREPO is part of the AGROSMARTglobal consortium as an internal partner and plays a major role in the activities aimed at **protecting geographical indications on the Internet**. The project has identified the need to support and strengthen the promotion and protection on the Internet of quality agri-food products such as GIs, which represent an important part of exports from Southwest Europe.

To carry out this activity, AREPO - in collaboration with competent experts in the field of intellectual property - elaborated a **"best practice" guide** for GI consortia, producer associations and cooperatives in the EU, aiming to **provide them with operational tools to protect their Geographical Indications (GIs) on the Internet**. The fight against Internet fraud is essential to protect the rights of producers and consumers.

The guide will be communicated to the member regions shortly and presented at the 5th edition of the European event for the promotion of quality and origin products organised by AREPO in the framework of the project.

AREPO also presented the good practice guide at the AGROSMARTglobal Final Forum to disseminate the main results of the project. This event was organised by the coordinator AGACA (Union of Agri-Food Cooperatives of Galicia) in Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, on 7, 8 and 9 February 2023.

Finally, AREPO plays a key role in disseminating the project results to its network and to strategic political representatives, and it is in this context that AREPO organises its major **European event for the promotion of quality and origin products** on 30 March 2023 in Brussels: AREPO will benefit from €26 820 co-financed at 75% by the ERDF to finance the organisation of this event within the framework of the AGROSMARTglobal project in order to highlight the project during the afternoon of conferences and to allow the agri-food cooperatives of the Sudoe to promote their products of quality and origin to a large audience of agricultural stakeholders during the evening of tasting.

AREPO has a **total budget of €118,360, 75% co-financed by the ERDF**, to implement all its activities.

## 9.2 MOVING (RIA PROJECT OF THE HORIZON 2020 PROGRAMME)



**RUR-01-2019:** "Building modern rural policies on long-term visions and societal engagement"

[MOVING - MOUNTAIN VALORISATION THROUGH INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND GREEN GROWTH](#) - is a four-year project (September 2020 - August 2024) gathering 23

partners and coordinated by the University of Córdoba, Spain.

The **overall objective** of MOVING is to build capacity and co-develop relevant policy frameworks across Europe for the **establishment of value chains that would contribute to the resilience and sustainability of mountain areas to climate change**. To achieve this objective, MOVING has launched a bottom-up participatory process with the value chain actors (regional and European stakeholders and policy makers): **the Community of Practice (CoP)**.

The CoP is a core feature of the project. It consists of a Science-Society-Policy interface at European level to involve different stakeholders (MOVING partners and external to the project) and at different territorial levels (regional and European) around climate change resilience of mountain value chains, and to bring together interested stakeholders to contribute to the co-creation and validation of all research outputs delivered by MOVING.

The MOVING CoP has been materialised through Multi-Actor Platforms (MAPs). MOVING has created 24 MAPs across Europe:

- **23 regional Multi-Actor Platforms (regional MAPs)**, established in the 23 reference regions identified by the project partners: they will enable the exchange of local knowledge between stakeholders from the reference regions up to the European level. To find out more about the regional MAPs, [click here](#).

- **1 European Multi-Actor Platform (EU MAP):** it will provide a space for stakeholders that are interested to exchange, learn and interact at European level on the climate change resilience of mountain value chains. Interested in joining the EU MAP? [Find out more here.](#)

AREPO is part of the MOVING consortium as an **internal partner** and will play a major role in the **evaluation of the policy recommendations** issued by the project.

AREPO is actively involved in the promotion and dissemination of the results of the MOVING project. To this end, AREPO contributed in the definition of the programme and delivered a presentation during the [second EU MAP webinar on EU quality schemes and their added value for mountain value chains](#), held on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2022.

Furthermore, AREPO has started working in collaboration with Euromontana on the elaboration of a **survey on the implementation of the optional quality term (OQT) mountain product for regions and producers**. AREPO and Euromontana will run the survey through their networks during the month of March 2023. The results of the survey will be used to update and expand [Euromontana report on OQT's implementation and impact](#) (2020). These findings will be further tested and explored by 3 national case studies in Romania, France and Italy, conducted by MOVING partners.

Finally, AREPO will contribute to the development and evaluation of policy recommendations.

On 17-18 October 2022, AREPO participated in the first in-presence MOVING Steering Committee Meeting in Saignélegier (Switzerland). In order to discuss and evaluate the developments of the project, another Steering Committee Meeting had place virtually on 7-8 February 2023.

AREPO has a **total budget of €85 600, 100% financed by the programme**, to implement all its activities.

#### AWAITING TO BE SUBMITTED

### 9.3 HORIZON EUROPE CALL ON GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY

AREPO has identify an important topic in Horizon Europe work programme for 2023: the call "**HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES: Investigating the contribution of geographical indications (GIs) to sustainable development and optimising support for newly established schemes**".

The call foresees a € **3 million budget** in order, among other objectives, to provide a sound analysis of the state of the art research on the impacts of GIs schemes in terms of sustainability; to assess sustainability impacts of all GIs products and formulate best practices, decision tools and recommendations for producers and policy makers to improve GIs sustainability.

The main objective of the project is to improve the design and implementation of the GI system in order to support the implementation of sustainable agriculture, healthy and sustainable food and sustainable food systems in line with the objectives of the Farm to Fork strategy.

AREPO is an active member of a consortium coordinated by INRAE and composed by several members of its scientific council, partners of the H2020 Project Strength2food and other scientific partner across the EU.

**AREPO main role will be to create and coordinate a multi-actor network of stakeholders from the GI sector** (GI producers, consumers, control bodies and public authorities) in order to support the co-creation of the scientific research as well as to validate and disseminate the results. In collaboration with Euromontana, we will be in charge of the **dissemination and exploitation** of the results in order to ensure the uptake of the scientific research by GI producers as well as public administration (regional, national and EU).

**The deadline for the submission is April 7<sup>th</sup> and the results of the evaluation should be public in 5-6 months.**