

AREPO report on the 1st General Assembly of 2026

24 March 2026 | online



The Association of European Regions for Products of Origin

The European network of regions and producer associations
that deals with products of quality and origin

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Part 1 | Introduction

AREPO's first General Assembly of 2026 was held **online**, on Zoom Platform, on **24 March 2026**.

Interpretation was provided in **DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, IT**.

The General Assembly was organised virtually in order to allow AREPO members to meet in person shortly afterwards in Brussels, on the occasion of the 6th edition of the AREPO European promotional event dedicated to Geographical Indications and quality products, which took place on 23 April 2026.

In this context, the virtual General Assembly was conceived primarily as a **statutory meeting**, aimed at approving the activities carried out in 2025 as well as the 2025 financial accounts, while also providing members with an update on AREPO's upcoming activities and the main EU policy developments of interest for the GI sector.

The Assembly was preceded by an **online session dedicated to recent EU legislative developments in the wine sector**, with a presentation by **Ms Daniela Ida ZANDONÀ**, European Federation of Origin Wines (EFOW), followed by an exchange with AREPO members. [Click here to consult the presentation.](#)

Part 2 | Statutory part

AREPO Secretary General, **Mr Laurent Gomez**, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and presenting the agenda of the day. He then invited **Mr Alessandro Beduschi**, AREPO President, to deliver his welcome address and introduce the plenary session.

AREPO President warmly welcomed all participants, thanking all member regions for their continuous support. He also expressed his appreciation to the AREPO team for their daily work, their support in coordinating the Association's activities, and for the preparation of the Assembly and the various events taking place during the year.

I. Annual activity report of the Presidency

Mr Beduschi presented **AREPO's 2025 activity report** (for more detailed information, [please see the activity report](#)), providing an overview of AREPO's main activities carried out in 2025 and the first months of 2026.

The President highlighted the growing interest in AREPO among European regions. In particular, the Regions of Abruzzo, Calabria and Liguria expressed interest in joining the Association. Liguria formally joined AREPO as an observer member in early 2026. He stressed the importance of expanding AREPO's representativeness in order to strengthen its legitimacy and advocacy capacity at EU level.

Mr Beduschi underlined AREPO's active contribution to the debate surrounding the European Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food, particularly regarding the future Action Plan for Geographical Indications announced by Commissioner Christophe Hansen for 2027. AREPO has worked closely with DG AGRI and other partner organisations to contribute to the reflection on future measures supporting the GI sector.

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In this context, the President recalled the meeting held in April 2025 between the AREPO Executive Board and **Mr Diego Canga Fano**, Director for Quality, Research and Innovation, Outreach at DG AGRI, dedicated to discussing the future EU Action Plan for GIs.

A key moment for the Association in 2025 was the organisation, together with EFOW and oriGIn EU, of the conference *"A Producers' Vision for the EU Action Plan on Geographical Indications & Launch of the GI SMART Community Platform"*, held in Brussels on 25-26 June 2025 within the framework of the Horizon Europe project GI SMART. The conference gathered more than 200 participants, including GI producer groups, regional and national authorities, researchers, Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission.

Mr Beduschi also referred to the participation of AREPO in the European Forum on Geographical Indications organised in Siena in December 2025 by Fondazione Qualivita and oriGIn. On that occasion, Commissioner Christophe Hansen confirmed the Commission's intention to prepare an EU Action Plan for GIs by 2027.

Concerning EU promotion policy, the President recalled AREPO's contribution to the preparation of the 2026 Annual Work Programme for EU agri-food promotion policy. AREPO actively advocated for maintaining a strong budget dedicated to the promotion of quality products and Geographical Indications.

He also highlighted AREPO's work on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Multiannual Financial Framework. AREPO analysed the Commission proposals and launched internal reflections among members on the future architecture of the CAP and its implications for the GI sector.

Mr Beduschi stressed the excellent relations maintained by AREPO with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions. As a matter of fact, AREPO continues to collaborate closely with DG AGRI, the AGRI Committee of the European Parliament and the Intergroup on Wine, Quality Foodstuff and Spirits.

Regarding projects, the President recalled AREPO's strong involvement in the Horizon Europe project GI SMART, which will continue until 2028. AREPO leads the work package dedicated to communication, dissemination, exploitation and stakeholder engagement.

Finally, Mr Beduschi presented the main activities planned for 2026, including:

- the 6th edition of the AREPO European promotion event dedicated to GI products in Brussels on 23 April 2026;
- the first pilot edition of a European fair dedicated to Geographical Indications to be held from 11 to 14 May 2026;
- the technical meeting on public regional quality schemes organised in Bilbao on 20-21 May 2026 in cooperation with the Basque Government;
- the European workshop organised in Brussels on 25 June 2026 in the framework of the GI SMART project;
- the second General Assembly of AREPO to be hosted by the Lombardy Region in Mantova on 15-16 October 2026.

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The report was approved.

II. Intervention by AREPO Vice-Presidency

Mr César Saldaña, President of CADO and Vice-President of AREPO, stressed the importance of the active participation of producer organisations within the Association.

He recalled that AREPO's dual structure, bringing together both regional authorities and producer organisations, represents one of the Association's main strengths and gives AREPO a unique legitimacy at EU level.

Mr Saldaña invited all AREPO member regions that have not yet designated official producer representatives to complete this process in order to reinforce the role and representativeness of the College of Producers.

The Vice-President also focused on the technical meeting on public regional quality schemes organized in Bilbao on 20-21 May 2026. He highlighted the growing development of regional public quality schemes across Europe and stressed the need for an open and constructive discussion on the coexistence between these schemes and the EU GI system.

According to Mr Saldaña, AREPO offers the ideal platform for discussing these issues and identifying balanced solutions that preserve and strengthen the European system of Geographical Indications.

He further proposed opening a reflection within AREPO on the new EU framework for Geographical Indications for craft and industrial products, recognising the potential importance of these schemes for territorial development while acknowledging the need for careful analysis of their relationship with agri-food GIs.

Several members intervened during the discussion, stressing the importance of maintaining consensus between the College of Regions and the College of Producers on all strategic positions adopted by AREPO.

III. Presentation and vote on the state of the AREPO accounts 2025 and provisional accounts 2026



AREPO Treasurer, **Ms Temanuata Girard**, Vice-President for Agriculture and Food of the Centre-Val de Loire Region, took the floor to comment on the state of the accounts for 2025 and submitting them to the vote of the General Assembly for approval ([Click here to consult all related documents](#)).

Ms Girard thanked the AREPO team for its daily work and underlined the sound financial position of the Association. She highlighted that the GI SMART project contributes to ensuring the financial stability of AREPO until 2028.

Mr Laurent Gomez, AREPO Secretary General, then presented in detail the 2025 financial report and the provisional budget for 2026.

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The Secretary General recalled that the accounts had been audited by an independent auditor and confirmed the sound financial management of the Association.

The financial year 2025 closed with a **positive result of approximately €7,500**.

The main expenses concerned personnel costs, organisation of the General Assemblies, interpretation services and support activities linked to European projects.

29 member regions paid their membership fee. The financial stability of AREPO is further reinforced by the **diversification of its resources through participation in European projects**. In particular, the GI SMART project provides additional support for the Association's activities over the 2024–2028.

At the same time, AREPO continues to limit structural costs thanks to the in-kind support provided by member regions, notably the **free use of office premises in Brussels by the Emilia-Romagna Region and the provision by the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region of the Secretary General and administrative support staff**.

The provisional budget for 2026 was proposed in balance, as usual. It includes the organisation of AREPO's statutory meetings, the 2026 European promotion event in Brussels and the activities linked to the GI SMART project.



The General Assembly **unanimously** approved the accounts 2025 and the provisional accounts 2026.

IV. Reminder on the contribution 2026

The General Assembly held in October 2025 voted unanimously in favour of maintaining the annual contribution at € 6.000 for 2026. The Secretary General reminded the amount and informed that reminder will be sent to Regions whose payment is still pending.

Part 3 | Thematic part

I. Update on AREPO main policy priorities and activities realised in 2025 and in the first months of 2026

Ms Francesca Alampi, policy officer of AREPO, presented the main EU policy developments relevant to the GI sector.

She first provided an overview of the 2026 EU promotion policy Annual Work Programme, highlighting the increase in the budget dedicated to promotion programmes for Geographical Indications and quality products.

Ms Alampi also presented the latest developments concerning the future Multiannual Financial Framework and the future CAP. She recalled that the European Parliament had begun discussions on

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the legislative proposals and highlighted the importance for AREPO members to contribute actively to the debate in the coming months.

Another important topic addressed during the presentation concerned the European Commission's "Safe Hearts" initiative on cardiovascular health. Ms Alampi explained that the initiative includes reflections on healthy diets, food environments and ultra-processed foods, raising potential implications for Geographical Indications. She stressed the importance for the GI sector to actively participate in this debate in order to ensure that GI products are recognised as part of balanced diets and sustainable food systems.

Several members intervened on this topic, expressing concerns about approaches based exclusively on nutrient profiling and the possible negative impact of certain measures on traditional GI products.

Participants stressed the need to differentiate GI products from ultra-processed foods and highlighted the importance of considering traditional production methods, cultural heritage and moderate consumption patterns.

Members also referred to the Nutri-Score debate and the need for AREPO to continue monitoring developments regarding food labelling policies.

Please, consult the [PowerPoint presentation](#) to know more on these topics and the [Activity Report](#) to see the main policy updates and results achieved in 2025.

II. Update on GI SMART

Ms Giulia Scaglioni, policy officer of AREPO presented an update on the **Horizon Europe project "GI SMART"**, launched in June 2024 and running until 2028.

She recalled that the project aims to strengthen the contribution of Geographical Indications to sustainable food systems and territorial development.

The project, coordinated by the Institut National de Recherche sur l'Agriculture, l'Alimentation et l'Environnement (INRAE, France), involves 17 public and private partners from 8 European Member States. Among them, academic partners with expertise in GI and members of AREPO Scientific Committee and international and EU networks representing stakeholders in food and wine GIs.

AREPO, with a total budget of **220 000 €**, plays a role in many of the research activities envisaged by the project and assists other partners in their tasks. In particular, AREPO is Work Package Leader for Communication, Dissemination, Exploitation, and Stakeholder Engagement, in collaboration with Euromontana, to ensure the uptake of the scientific research by GI producers as well as public administrations (regional, national and EU).

Ms Scaglioni gave an overview of the first developments within the four key research pillars on which the project is based.

Then, she delved into the presentation of the main activities carried out so far by AREPO within the project and on its role in coordinating stakeholder engagement.

Ms Scaglioni highlighted the successful launch of the GI SMART Community Platform during the conference *"A Producers' Vision for the EU Action Plan on Geographical Indications & Launch of the GI SMART Community Platform held in Brussels on 25–26 June 2025*, in collaboration with EFOW and oriGIn EU, and the establishment of national and EU-level multi-actor platforms.



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She also presented the results of the [workshop with consumer organisations](#) organised in collaboration with SAFE in October 2025 and she reminded the 2026 activities for the EU-level MAP, including:

- the **VI edition of the AREPO European Event on Quality and Origin Products**, to be held in Brussels on 23 April 2026;
- the GIs Workshop “*From Recognition to Value*”, to be held in Brussels on 25 June 2026, co-organised by AREPO, EFOW, oriGIn EU and INRAE.

The AREPO policy officer also commented on the positive evaluation received from the European Commission concerning the implementation of the first phase of the project.

Ms Scaglioni concluded her presentation with the survey on sustainability perception currently being conducted within the project. Members were invited to contribute to the dissemination of the questionnaire among GI stakeholders.

Please, consult the [PowerPoint presentation of the GA](#) and the [activity report](#) to know more on EU projects.

III. Upcoming events

Ms Francesca Alampi and Ms Giulia Scaglioni, AREPO policy officers, presented the activities planned for 2026.

They provided practical information regarding the AREPO European promotion event dedicated to Geographical Indications to be held in Brussels on 23 April 2026. The event will include a high-level conference followed by a tasting session involving products from 24 participating regions. The AREPO team presented the logistical preparations underway and thanked the participating regions for their collaboration.

Members were also informed about:

- TuttoFood fair in Milan, from 11 to 14 May;
- the technical meeting on public regional quality schemes in Bilbao, on 20-21 May;
- the GI workshop to be organised in Brussels in June 2026 in the framework of GI SMART;
- the next General Assembly in Mantova on 15-16 October 2026.

Please, consult the [PowerPoint presentation of the GA](#) to know more.

Part 4 | Conclusions

The General Assembly ended with the Secretary General thanking the AREPO team for organising and guaranteeing the smooth running of the virtual Assembly, together with all the interpreters who allowed everyone to take the floor and follow the meeting in their own mother tongues.

AREPO President, **Mr Alessandro Beduschi**, took the floor to close the General Assembly’s works by thanking participants for their active contribution to the discussion and encouraging them to participate in the many activities and initiatives that will take place throughout 2026.

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