

2018

SURVEY OF TRADITIONAL FOOD AND WINES IN HASKOVO DISTRICT

"Prepared in accordance with Contract of 15.06.2018 with the subject: "Development of methodology and surveys" under the project "Promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage of Bulgarian-Greek cross-border region through smart and digital tools" with the acronym "eTOURIST" under the INTERREG V-A Cooperation Programme "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020", ref. No 1714, Subsidy Contract No B2.6c.07/09.10.2017

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document in implementation of Action 2. Studying the traditional food and wines in Haskovo District has been prepared by EFTA SERVICES Ltd. - Contractor in execution of the Public Procurement Contract with Regional Municipalities Association “Maritza” – Contracting authority with subject "Development of methodology and surveys" under the project "Promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage of Bulgarian-Greek cross-border region through smart and digital tools" with acronym "eTOURIST" under the INTERREG V-A "Greece-Bulgaria- 2014-2020" Cooperation Programme, Ref. No 1714, Subsidy Contract No B2.6c.07/09.10.2017

The purpose of the document is to examine the traditional food and wines in the region of Haskovo and to evaluate the traditional culinary features of Haskovo district in the context of the criterion "significance for the preservation of the region’s culinary heritage", as well as to explore the opportunities for promoting Haskovo as a wine-growing region and to analyze the typical local wine grape varieties and their added value to the economic development of the area.

II. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL FOOD AND WINES

"Cuisine is an integral and extremely distinctive part of the culture of a society."

The term "cuisine" did not come to life all of a sudden, it evolved along with the overall cultural development of mankind. Eating is an essential element in the building of individual and collective identity. On the individual level, we grow by eating food typical of our culture. Food is part of who we really are. Many of us associate the food from our childhood with feelings of warmth and dear memories and it binds us to our families, which have a special and personal value to us. The food eaten at home often turns into the comfortable form of food we look for as adults in a time of spiritual frustration and stress. On a larger scale, food is an important element of culture. Traditional cuisine is passed on from generation to generation. It is an expression of cultural identity. For example, immigrants usually bring the traditional food of their native countries with them wherever they go, and cooking their traditional dishes is a way to preserve their culture when they move to new places. Continuing to produce the food from their native culture symbolizes the pride they take in their ethnicity.

Until the mid 19th and early 20th century, average Bulgarians were unpretentious in terms of what was being put on their table. Food usually consisted of one and the same products, depending on the season. The food itself, both in the countryside and in towns,

¹ <https://bulgarianhistory.org/tradicionna-bulgarska-kuhnia-nazad-vuv-vremeto/>

This document has been created within the framework of the project "Promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage of the Bulgarian-Greek cross-border region through smart and digital tools" (eTOURIST), financed under the INTERREG VA Cooperation Programme2 "Greece-Bulgaria 2014 -2020 ", Subsidy Contract No B2.6c. 07/09.10.2017 The Project is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg VA "Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020" Cooperation Programme. This document has been created within the framework of the Project „Promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage of Bulgarian – Greek cross-border region through smart and digital tools“ (eTOURIST), financed under the INTERREG V-A Cooperation Program "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020", Subsidy Contract No B2.6c.07/09.10.2017. The Project is co funded by the European Regional Development Fund and by national funds of the countries participating in the Interreg V-A "Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020" Cooperation Programme."

came from the home-made production of the household itself - from the field or garden in the yard. Traditional Bulgarian dishes, such as soups, stews, stuffed vegetables, were present daily on the table. During the harvest season, when the entire day was spent working in the field, people used to eat only bread and onions, and when it was not a period of fasting - also cheese.

Bulgarian cuisine offers such a variety of ingredients that it was impossible to experience any shortage of an ingredient or poor nutrition. For Bulgarians in the past, the preparation of dishes was not a vocation or some mysterious form of art, it was simply a household chore that had to be done, yet it was an extremely important part of their everyday lives. What we call today our morning meal or more popularly known as breakfast, did not bear that name in the past. This name emerged later, mainly under Russian influence. In the traditional Bulgarian ethnological dictionary, breakfast was called "porucheg" or "pohapka", meaning taking a bite. The so-called "pohapka" and lunch were not of such vital importance - usually the men going to work and the children going to school would carry food from home with them for these two meals. It was of major importance in what conditions the family would live - whether in an urban or in a village setting. In rural families the day started early at dawn and ended late in the evening, usually lasting for about 14 hours.

Dinner, however, was of great importance. It was regarded as a sacred ritual when everyone gathered around the table - young and old alike. It was unacceptable to be late or absent at dinnertime, with exceptions being made only for the sick or those who were on the road. Dinner was always eaten at home. The dinner meal itself started only after the head of the family had come back. Everyone was eating together. The symbolism that this Bulgarian tradition holds is that every generation in a house carries something unique so everyone has something to learn from the other, whether younger or older. That is how the family grew stronger and the feeling in each and every family member that they have a close person next to them who is part of themselves reinforced the sense of belonging to a common ideal and nation.

Traditionally, bread was the staple food of Bulgarians regardless of their social status - no matter whether they lived in a town or village, whether rich or poor, bread was always present at the table. Some traditional Bulgarian foodstuffs such as beans have been known in Bulgarian lands for about 300 years now. The Bulgarian agricultural fields have ideal conditions for its cultivation. Beans as well as maize were brought to the Balkan Peninsula mainly by merchants from the Ottoman Empire who had travelled to the American continent. Another product of significant importance in Bulgarian cuisine is sour cabbage (sauerkraut). And surely the most emblematic food in Bulgarian national cuisine is yogurt. Desserts also have a serious presence in Bulgarian cuisine. The preparation of jams/preserves from different types of fruits is a tradition that is still observed today. Examples of these are petmez (thickened grape syrup), rachel (quince or pumpkin jelly or jam), as well as jams made of figs, raspberries or rose petals. Very popular among sweet foods and drinks are halva and boza. Boza is an ancient drink which used to be made from a fermented mash of millet, wheat, rye or another type of

flour, sweetened with sugar or honey. Halva was traditionally made from ground sesame seeds, butter and other ingredients. The most popular variety is the so-called tahan-halva, which is made from roasted and ground sesame seeds in the form of a paste (tahini). Along with the variety of dishes, Bulgaria boasts a centuries-old tradition in the preparation of homemade wine. This beverage plays a particularly important role in Bulgarian history and traditional life, and its presence is indispensable on the table of almost every festive occasion. It is a well-known fact that even British politician Winston Churchill used to order each year 500 litres of Bulgarian wine, which serves as yet another proof that it has long been appreciated and well-known for its good taste and sophisticated properties all over the world.

III. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HASKOVO DISTRICT

Haskovo district is located in the south-eastern part of Bulgaria's South Central region.



It comprises 261 towns and villages organized in 11 municipalities: **Haskovo, Dimitrovgrad, Harmanli, Simeonovgrad, Svilengrad, Madzharovo, Ivaylovgrad, Lyubimets, Mineralni Bani, Stambolovo** and **Topolovgrad** with a total area of 5,543 km².

The area has a varied relief, its northern and central part being occupied by the Upper Thracian Plain. A distinctive characteristic of this region is the presence of the vast, low-lying lands along river banks and high groundwater that favour the inten-

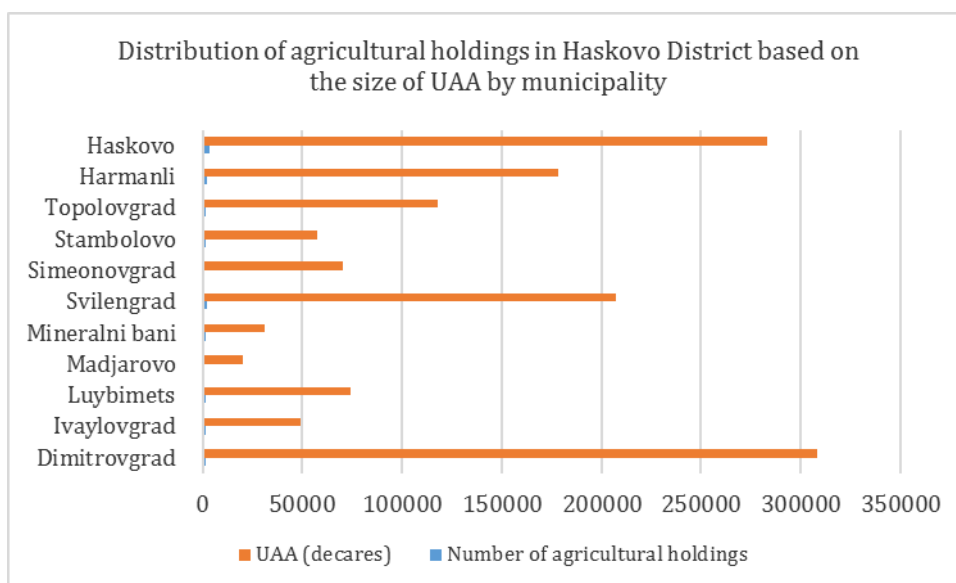
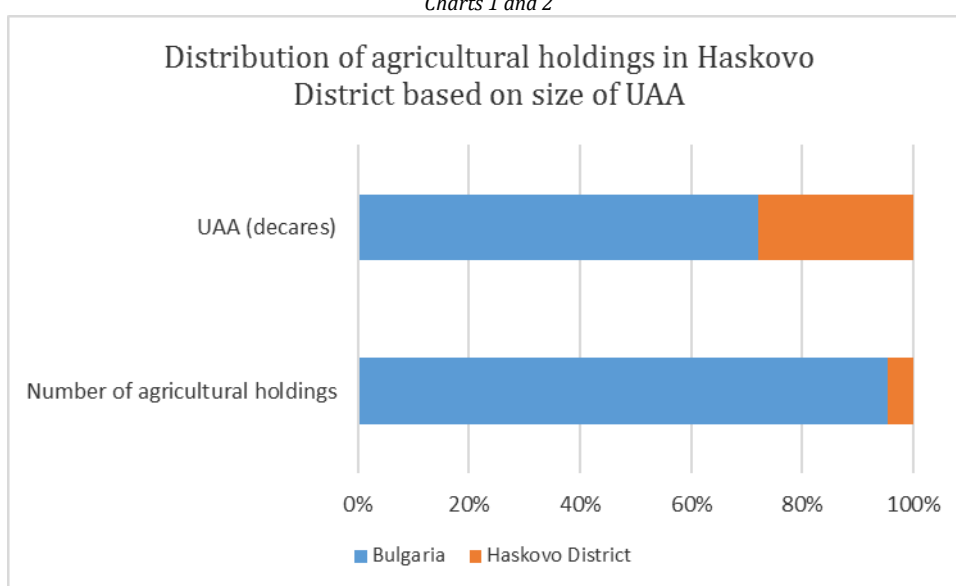
sive use of farmland. The presence of flat country relief and fertile soils has a beneficial impact on all sectors and sub-sectors of agriculture, the construction of irrigation systems and transport arteries. A large area of the southern part of the district is occupied by the lower slopes and foothills of the Eastern Rhodopes and the Sakar Mountain. The territory of the Eastern Rhodopes is characterized by rich flora and fauna. The Mediterranean influence, the geological past of the mountain and the peculiarities of local life and culture have helped form and preserve diverse habitats, which has resulted in an extremely high biodiversity.

The current state of the local economy in Haskovo district is characterized by well-developed clear-cut sectors and well-established market traditions. Large production units are the active driving force of the local economy, while small and medium-sized enterprises contribute to improving the business environment, accelerating the economic growth and optimizing the productive structure of the regional economy. Most of

smaller businesses operate in the field of services and trade, including sewing and knit-wear companies, bakeries, meat processing and dairy processing workshops, etc.

One of the leading sectors for Haskovo district, employing most of the population in the region, is **plant growing**. Factors that have a beneficial impact are the specific soil and climate conditions for the development of agriculture. The moderate-Mediterranean climate, combined with the abundant water resources in the region, are important prerequisites for growing a wide variety of crops.

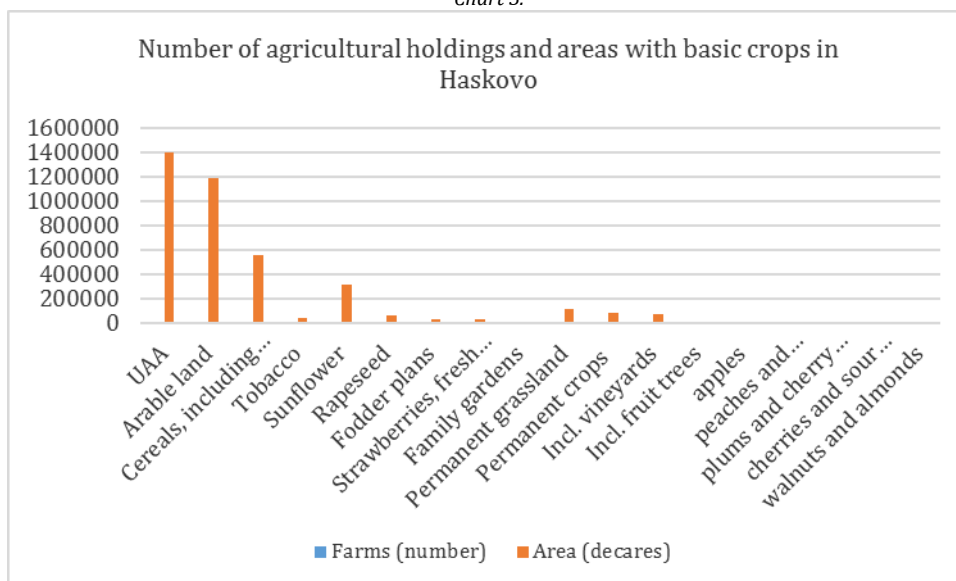
Charts 1 and 2



Source: NSI

A rich variety of agricultural crops are grown, including wheat, barley, and maize. The most widespread technical crops are sunflower, cotton and tobacco. Tobacco is grown mainly in the lower parts of the Eastern Rhodopes and Sakar Mountain. Haskovo District is famous for its production of watermelons, melons, with its excellent grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers and many other fruits and vegetables. The region boasts exceptionally favourable conditions for growing large plantations of permanent crops - strawberries, raspberries, sour cherries, cherries, apricots, peaches and others.

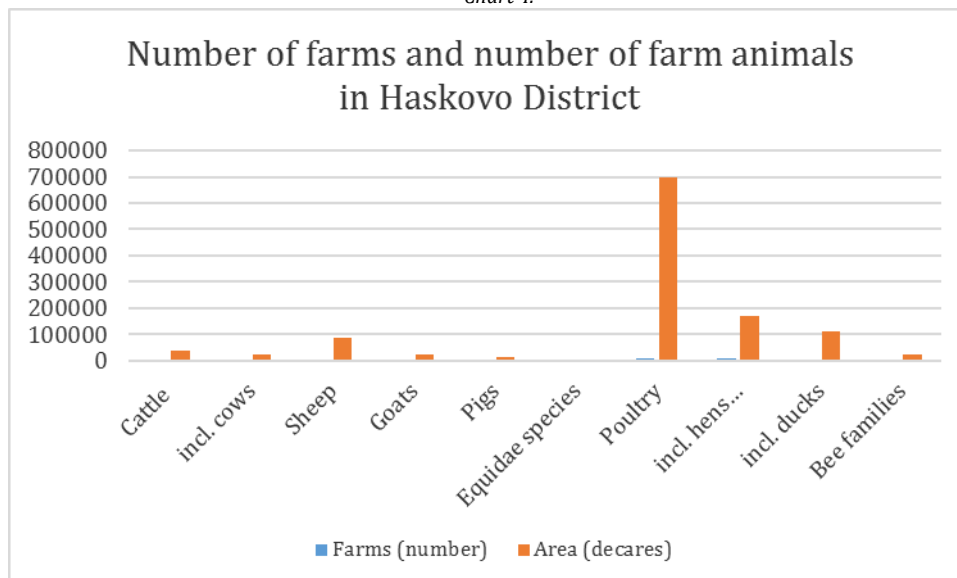
Chart 3.



Source: NSI

Priority in the development of plant growing is the planting and replanting of young vineyards, increasing the plots planted with permanent crops and the creation of nurseries for certified species. The region is famous for its good wine grape varieties Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pamid and Dimyat. The wine-making centres in the territory of the region attract the fans of the so-called "wine tourism". The sub-sector of **livestock breeding** is developed almost entirely by private entrepreneurs and is characterized by a high relative share of small farms. The low-lying lands of the region are favourable for breeding cattle, pigs and poultry, and the semi-mountainous areas - for sheep and goats. The prospects for livestock farming in the region are related to the consolidation of livestock farms in order to increase productivity and benefit to the maximum from funding under international programs. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in farms raising ducks, etc.

Chart 4.



Source: NSI

The food industry in the area is represented by bread-making and confectionery, meat processing, dairy processing and canning industries. In the field of bread-making as well as pastry and confectionary production, many private companies, bakeries and pastry workshops operate in Haskovo district, with a relatively modern technological equipment producing a variety of products. The same is true for meat and dairy businesses. There are many small meat-processing factories, dairy farms for the production of cheese, yellow cheese and butter, equipped with state-of-the-art machinery operating at high capacity and producing high-quality products meeting modern international requirements. The big dairy-producing company Balgarsko Sirene OOD (Bulgarian Cheese Ltd) operates in the territory of Haskovo district, equipped with completely new processing facilities, fully in compliance with EU standards. Another big milk-processing company operates in the town of Haskovo - Bulmilk (the first certified milk-processing factory in the country with a quality certificate ISO 9001: 2000). Some of the larger and more popular meat-processing companies in the region are: Lotos OOD in Dimitrovgrad, Svarex EOOD in Haskovo, Burdenis 93 OOD in Svilengrad, Roni OOD in Harmanli, etc.

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY

In connection with the study of traditional food and wines in Haskovo District in implementation of the Contract with subject "Development of methodology and surveys" under the project "Promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage of Bulgarian-Greek cross-border region through smart and digital tools" (eTOURIST) under the INTERREG V-A Cooperation Programme "Greece-Bulgaria 2014-

2020", ref. No 1714, Subsidy Contract No B2.6c.07/09.10.2017, the following methods and tools have been used:

- ❖ Review and analysis of sources of information and related documents;
- ❖ Survey questionnaire - incl. formulating questions and developing tables for entering and processing information.

Numerous sources of information have been studied and evaluated, including: strategic documents (Haskovo District Regional Strategy 2014-2020, Municipal Development Plans of the 11 municipalities, the National Strategy for Development of Viticulture and Wine-making 2005-2025, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Agriculture of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020, the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Republic of Bulgaria, 2014-2030, etc.), multiple sites with statistical data, incl. other surveys conducted, relating to the cultural intangible heritage connected to food, all types of promotional materials, etc. (see Annex 1. List of sources of information).

In addition, a representative survey was carried out among the adult population of Haskovo region, whose final results illustrate the public perception (awareness, knowledge and assessment) of basic aspects of the region's culinary characteristics and its wine-growing potential. In this sense, they present the vision of broad groups of society on the examined topics. **As a result**, based on the study and analysis of the various sources of information and the questionnaire survey, more than 40 traditional dishes, more than 20 herbs and spices, a multitude of agricultural products and crops, traditional culinary events, as well as over 10 traditional and 5 unique wines for the region, have been identified. (**Annex 2.1. Systematized information on the traditional culinary features of Haskovo District** and **Appendix 2.2. Systematized information on wine-growing traditions in Haskovo District**).

A survey was conducted in the period July-August 2018 among the population of Haskovo district. A questionnaire (Annex 3) was developed as 402 people on the spot were selected through a representative quota and they voiced their opinions on the questions. In view of the topics, the questionnaire included a number of open-ended questions in order to avoid the possibility of a suggested answer and to allow for measuring as accurately as possible people's free associations/knowledge on the given topics. The information was collected based on the method of the semi-standardized face-to-face interviews. The survey was also conducted electronically, as the questionnaire (Annex 4) was sent via email to nearly 200 representatives of different stakeholders, incl. wine cellars, cultural community centres (chitalishe), museums, officials from district and municipal administrations, the Haskovo Regional Agriculture Directorate, the Executive Agency for Vine and Wine (EAVW), etc., to which only 10 people responded.

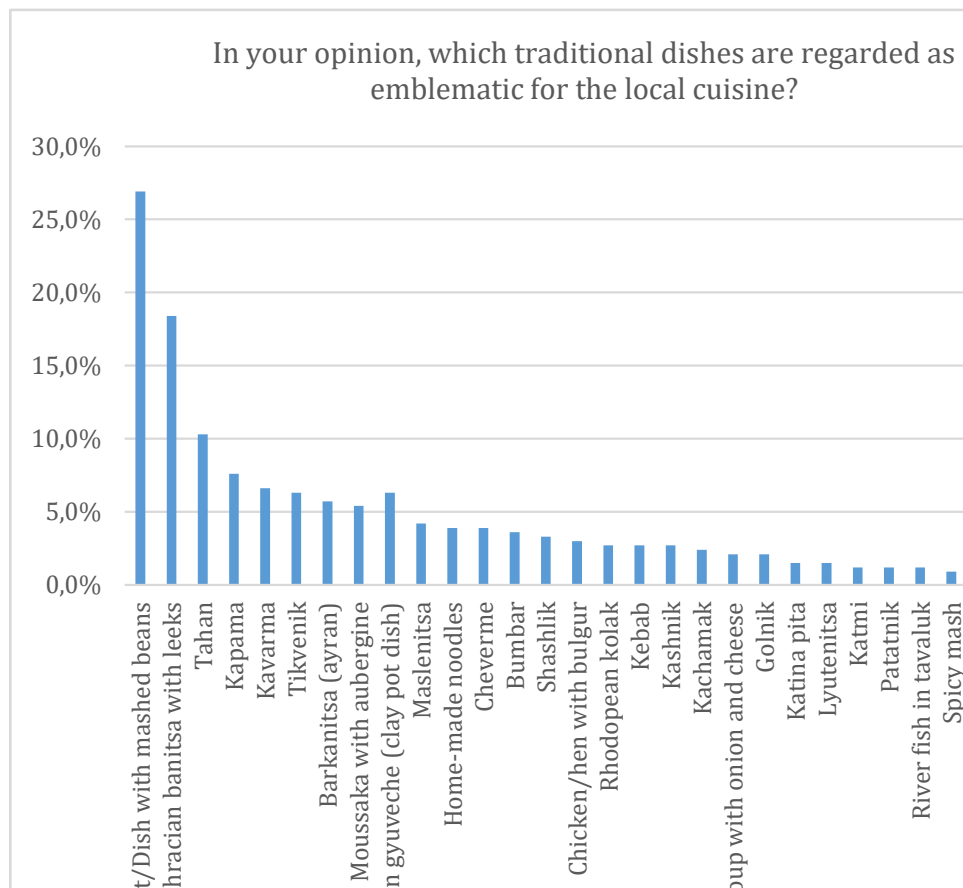
V. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE TRADITIONAL CULINARY FEATURES OF HASKOVO DISTRICT

As a result of the review of the various sources of information and the survey conducted in the territory of Haskovo district, it can be concluded that the local cuisine in Haskovo region is colourful and diverse. Centuries-old traditions and practices have survived to this day, with recipes in most towns and villages having been transmitted from one generation to another only to remain unchanged for hundreds of years. It can be concluded that a certain "memory" exists about culinary features, including specific characteristics, which makes the population a significant factor in preserving traditions. The general knowledge of the traditional culinary features of the area can be described as very good because:

- about 80% of respondents are able to give a free answer to the open-ended questions asked.
- the received responses make it possible to draw conclusions about the local culinary specifics, as some of the high shares of responses refer to typical local dishes.

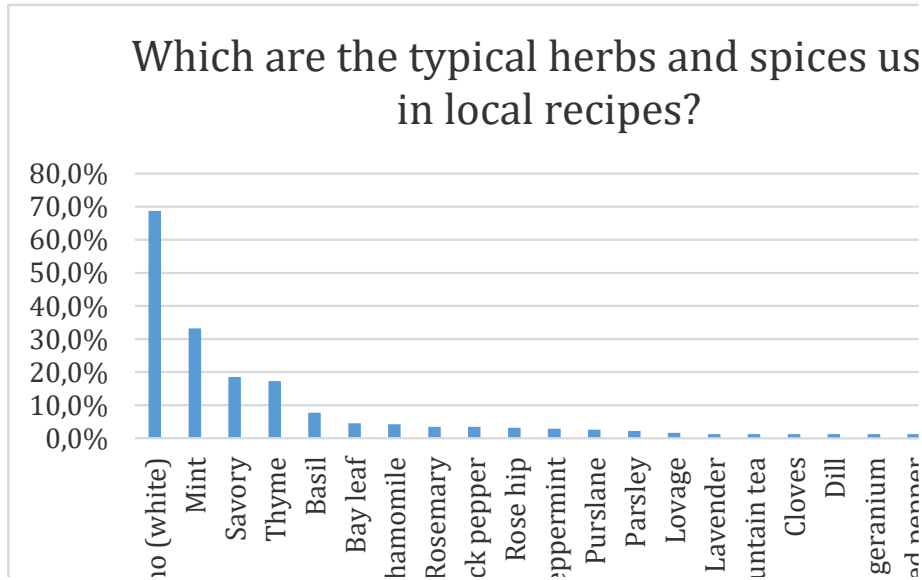
At the same time, one can discern a trend at the modernization of the local cuisine and the incorporation of dishes typical also for other places yet still perceiving them as characteristic for this region, as well as the influence of the cuisines of neighbouring countries (see Chart 5). Respondents identify 33 dishes as being traditional for the area and any indication here is important, insofar as it points to a unique dish and the list is very similar to the data that can be found in specialized culinary studies and the data gathered on the basis of the review of the sources of information.

Chart 5.



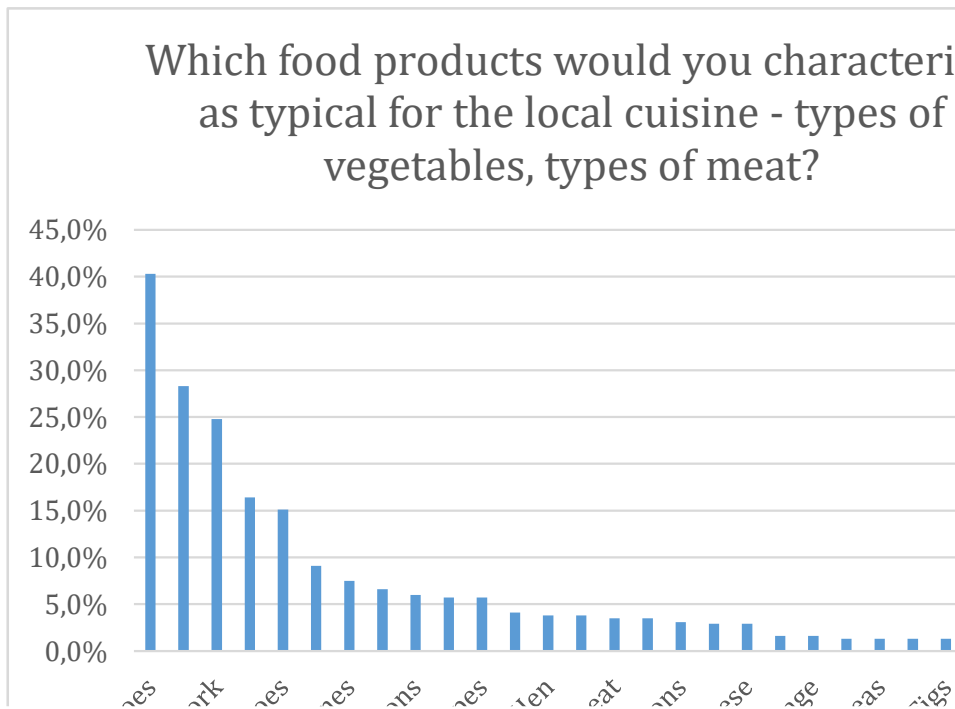
The recipes include lots of vegetables and spices, including oregano, garlic, pepper, thyme, mint, savory, bay leaf and paprika. Herbs have a strong presence in local cuisine, too. A variety of medicinal plants are used as spices and added to traditional dishes. Regarding spices, respondents demonstrate a very good knowledge of the local specifics, indicating 23 spices, definitively bringing white oregano to the foreground. Unlike regular oregano, which grows in many places in nature, white oregano can be found in limited areas along the rocky slopes of the Eastern Rhodopes (also Belasitsa Mountain and the Kresna Gorge) and it really lends an element of uniqueness to local cuisine.

Chart 6.



Local cuisine is dominated by a variety of vegetables, pork, lamb, nuts and local fruits, and in terms of ingredients bears a strong resemblance to Turkish cuisine.

Chart 7



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The question about traditional culinary events seems to be of highest difficulty to respondents as only 1/3 of them can indicate such an event and the list is quite modest. It can be assumed that such traditions and events are rather limited and/or not a very common practice. In this sample, the main event sticking out is the international culinary festival in Ivaylovgrad, which has been taking place for 7-8 years now and is popular with the respondents. Another interesting fact is that a rather new festival has been identified - the Festival of Sesame that has been approved for participation in the large-scale program of Plovdiv as European Capital of Culture in 2019. The festival aims at promoting the traditional culinary skills and practices of the population related to the cultivation and use of sesame. Activities such as a bazaar, demonstrations, workshops for sesame processing, and a music program are planned.

Chart 8.



Nearly 90% of respondents have some idea and can give an example of a traditional agricultural crop, but only 40% can identify a typical product of the region, which gives rise to the assumption that the area is rather a source of the raw materials and not so much of the specific products, which is naturally reflected in the public knowledge of the topic.

Chart 9

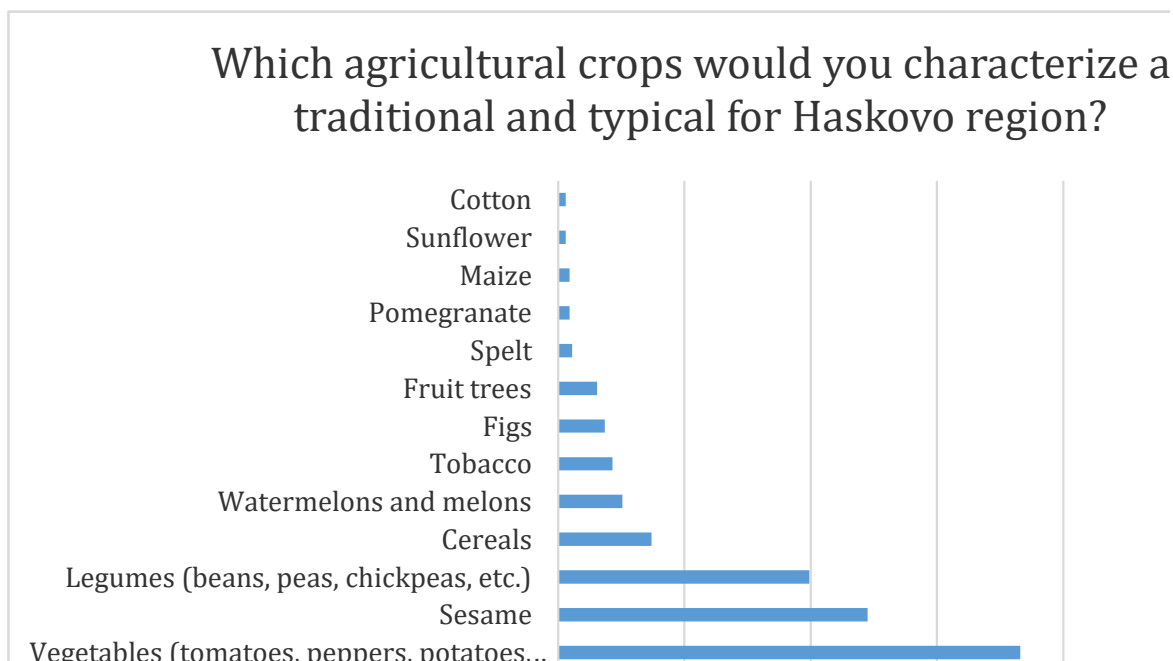
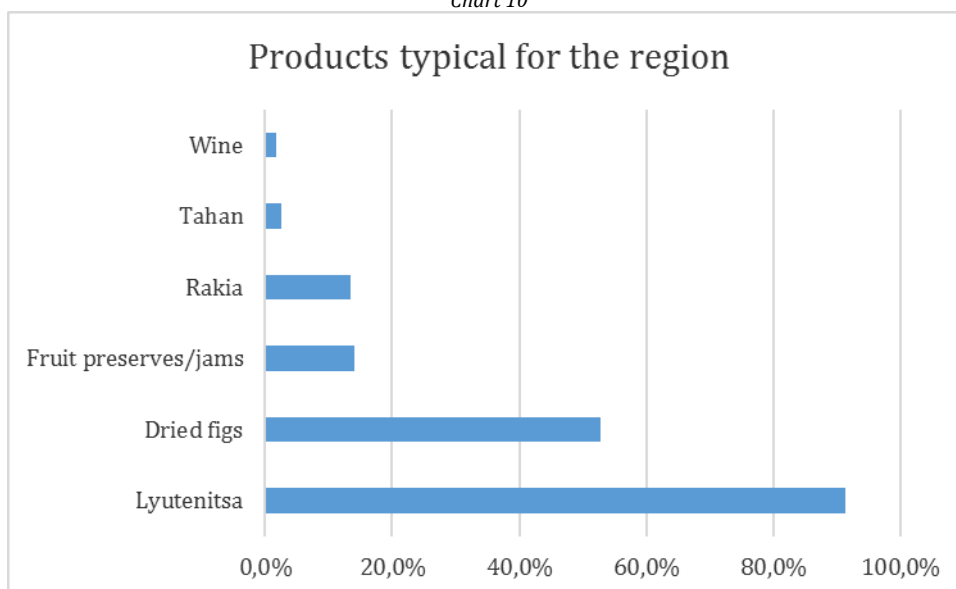


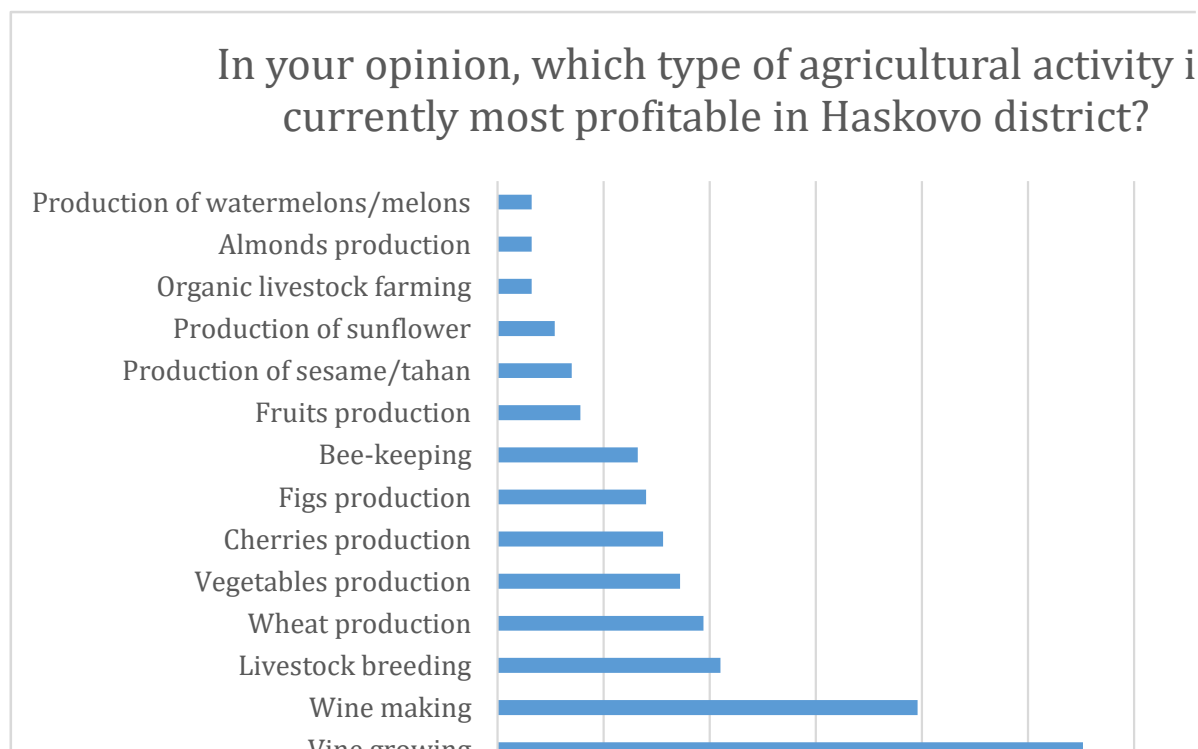
Chart 10



The cultivation of grapes/vineyards (49%) and vegetable production (36.6%) are the indisputable traditional crops that define the region's profile according to respondents. Coming second in importance are legumes and sesame. Quite logically, respondents point to wine and tahan as the region's key traditional products.

Again, the same activities (plant growing, viticulture, wine-making) are defined as currently the most profitable agricultural practices for the area, which also shows their vitality. Approximately 2/3 of the respondents comment on this issue.

Chart 11



SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE CULINARY HERITAGE

Regarding the assessment of how well-preserved local culinary traditions are, the most frequent answer is the neutral assessment, indicating that respondents have difficulty judging. Nevertheless, the average arithmetic score is close to 5 (4.78), which reveals the existence of preservation, but in no case of a high level. The collected data on typical recipes, spices and products also confirm this as far as the impact is noticeable of modern cuisine and of products that can be found in many other places. In this sense, it can be assumed that taking actions to restore, preserve and promote local cuisine, especially selected elements of it that are truly representative of the area, would be accepted very favourably by the public.

An entire set of factors plays a role when it comes to the preservation of the region's culinary heritage, including the skills, recipes, products, and the continuation of the traditions at home. The public vision clearly focuses on the practices inherent in the daily life of the local population as a prerequisite for safeguarding the culinary heritage to a much greater extent than the existence of specialized places for offering local cuisine

and perpetuating it in books. Logically, such activities would be met with more cooperation and commitment by local people.

	Rating (1-7) High score (5-7)
In your opinion, to what extent have local culinary traditions in Haskovo region been preserved?	4.78
To what extent are the following factors important for preserving the region's culinary heritage?	
Preserving the skills of cooking	5.91
Preserving the local recipes	5.88
Producing agricultural products typical of the local cuisine	40 50 60 75
Preserving these traditions at home	5.83
The availability of various eating places offering local dishes	5.32
Publishing books describing the culinary recipes and traditions	5.13
Support from local media which promote local recipes	10.
More festivals and local food exhibitions	10.

On the basis of the factors mentioned by the respondents as **important for preserving** the culinary heritage, we emphasize on the following:

1. preservation and popularization of local recipes of traditional cuisine such as bumbar, rabbit kapama, puska from Yabalkovo, smyanka, fish-tavaluk, Thracian maslenitsa, mashed boiled beans with meat pieces from the village of Dobrich, tatlii, shepherd's gyuvech, sesame seed biscuits, etc. /See Annex 2.1./;
2. maintaining a good level of production of agricultural products typical of the local cuisine such as vegetable crops /tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, beans/, fruits /watermelons, melons, vines/, etc. /See Annex 2.1./.

The everyday practice at home as a condition for preserving the culinary heritage is confirmed also by the question "Who has a decisive role in promoting and preserving the culinary traditions?", respondents give the highest score to the role of local people (6,64). This question also suggests that even if certain steps have been taken by regional and/or local authorities, they have not been brought to the attention of ordinary citizens who are also potential tourists. It is noteworthy that measures/events are conducted also by private entrepreneurs as individual initiatives.

	Rating (1-7) High score (5-7)
Municipal administration	5.29
Local people	6.64
District administration	5,00
Businesses operating in the field of tourism	5.81
Museums	5.52
Community centres	3.0 (51)
Local NGOs	4.18

In conclusion, we can summarize the following - food plays an important role in the formation of identities and the creation of a sense of belonging to a group, however the specific culinary features of Haskovo district still remain an unused resource, although the vision for development set out in the Haskovo Regional Strategy reads "**Improving the environment and quality of life through making the best use of the local potential**". Also, the strategy sets out that priority should be given to the preservation of regional identity related to support and popularization for the development of local crafts, wine making and production of specific food products, etc., which have high added value and which can lead to increasing the regional competitiveness, as well as to reinforcing the uniqueness of the area.

Local cuisine is entirely in the hands of the people and they themselves are the carriers of a tradition passed on by generations, which is increasingly threatened with modernization. This might lead to a moment when it is no longer recognized as separate from the national tradition and this could diminish the power of food to bring a community closer together and to form identities based on the distinction from "the other" as well as to create a sense of pride, which is valid only at the local level. This in turn might reduce Haskovo's potential to establish itself as a gastronomic destination. Moreover, the lack in Haskovo region of a characteristic element with which the area could be immediately recognizable has led to the growing popularity of a newborn emblem - the statue of the Holy Mother of God, built in recent years, which is unanimously and constantly mentioned as the symbol of the area (see Survey of the natural and cultural heritage of Haskovo district). Local action needs to be taken to make the area easily distinguishable in the eyes of the public. With its traditional cuisine and various dishes typical of the region and perpetuated through the generations, Haskovo has the potential to turn culinary tourism into a tourist experience for the purpose of recreation and/or entertainment, which can include both events related to food (festivals, contests, demonstrations, culinary shows and others) as well as activities directly supporting the development of local communities (visits to local producers and farmers' markets, tastings of food and wine, etc.). This type of tourism in any case will satisfy the needs of modern tourists for acquiring new experiences and knowledge.

VI. VINE-GROWING AND WINE-MAKING TRADITIONS IN HASKOVO DISTRICT

Vine-growing and wine-making are traditionally well-developed sectors of Bulgaria's economy. The availability of local grape varieties and clearly defined wine-growing regions combined with qualified manpower and up-to-date technical equipment are the necessary requirements for reaching a new production and market orientation of the trade in good quality wines. The significance of viticulture for the country's economy is manifest also in the state policies. With the adoption of the National Strategy for Development of Vine Growing and Wine Making 2005-2025 and the National Strategy

for Sustainable Development of Agriculture in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism in the Republic of Bulgaria, 2014-2030 /Updated version, 2017/ the state declares the importance of the sector to the country's economy.

For its part, Haskovo District possesses enormous potential for the development of the wine-growing sector. The region has been famous for a long time with its excellent grapes and high-quality wines. To date, all wine-making facilities in the region are specialized in the production of high-quality wines, which are very successful on the international market. Similar to food production, the importance of the wine sector is also manifested at the regional level (District Development Strategy 2014-220), in **Specific objective 3. Supporting the traditional industrial activities and promoting the use of local resources for economic development, Priority 1.1. Enhancing the competitiveness of the regional economy and supporting small and medium-sized businesses. As set out in the strategic part of the document**, priority is given to the boosting of specific economic sectors and traditional economic activities with potential for growth and future development on the territory of the Haskovo region **by using the unique advantages of the local economy and specifics.**

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF WINE PRODUCTION

Wine is deeply connected to the Bulgarian lands which were inhabited for thousands of years by the ancient Thracians who used wine in their religious rituals. Traditions in wine production have survived interrupted to this day and Bulgaria is now proud of its high-quality wines, some of which are made from unique local varieties with impressive properties.

Wine is an indispensable part of Bulgarian history, culture, everyday life and mentality. The Bulgarian land is an heir to ancient civilizations that have left an indelible mark on our present day. Ancient Thracians used wine as an important element of their religious rituals and as a means of reaching out to the gods. This is evidenced by the numerous sanctuaries found throughout the country, which reveal information about the ancient customs and the cult for the god of wine Zagreus. Bulgaria boasts some of the most important archaeological finds in the world, including gold and silver Thracian treasures, which are mostly comprised of beautiful sets of vessels for serving and drinking wine. The incorporation of the Orphic beverage in religious rituals is also associated with good traditions in vine-growing and wine-making.

After the establishment of the Bulgarian state, traditions in wine production were inherited and continued. Many medieval travellers crossing the Bulgarian lands wrote about the different types of wine they tried on their way and their specific properties.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, wine-growing was already professionally approached and the foundations were laid of the modern production of Bulgarian wines. Nowadays good-quality wines from Bulgarian producers can be found all over the globe. A high number of Bulgarian wines win prizes and surprise foreign

connoisseurs with their high quality and sophisticated taste. The taste for good wine and the interest in the local varieties gave rise to the emergence of wine tourism and wine tours and tastings in Bulgaria. Many of the wineries in the country organize events that introduce connoisseurs and guests to their most refined selections of wine.

Wine-growing has been practiced in the Bulgarian lands ever since the time of the Ancient Thracians. It also developed during the period of the Roman rule. After the foundation of the Bulgarian state in 681, vine-growing and wine-making continued to develop both in the 8th and 9th century as well as through the Middle Ages. Major grape varieties grown at that time were Pamid, Gamza, Mavrud, Shiroka melnishka (the broad-leaved Melnik vine), Dimyat, Red Misket

During the Ottoman Domination, the economic decline of the country affected also viticulture, but still it continued to exist. During this period, many dessert oriental grape varieties were introduced to Bulgaria, including Bolgar, Rezakia, Parmac, White and Red Fox Tail, Chaouch and others. By 1858 vineyards in Bulgaria covered a total area of approximately 420,000 decares (42,000 ha).

After the Liberation, viticulture developed rapidly and in 1897 vineyards in Bulgaria covered a total area of 1,200,000 decares (120,000 ha). A crisis occurred in Bulgarian viticulture after the phylloxera pest appeared. It was first detected in 1884 in Vidin and spread quickly from west to east across northern Bulgaria and then in southern Bulgaria. As a result of the rapid devastation of the vineyards at the end of the First World War, Bulgaria was left with only 434,180 decares, mainly on highly sandy soils, where the phylloxera could not develop. The recovery of vineyards both in Bulgaria and in Europe started by grafting of local cultivars on phylloxera-resistant cuttings. In 1893 Bulgaria saw the start of the establishment of state-run and later of private vine nurseries in which root stock cuttings from France were imported. They were grafted in nurseries and by 1921 there were 6,780 decares of nurseries in Bulgaria, which produced and grafted 45 million rootstock cuttings, i.e. the production of stockrooted grape vines as a new branch of viticulture developed considerably. The production of vines grafted onto rootstocks in the country began in 1889, as later in 1970 Bulgaria ranked first in the world in the production and export of grafted rootstock vines.

After the First World War, viticulture in Bulgaria was restored and by 1944 vineyards already covered an area of 1 5627 330 decares. After 1956 viticulture in Bulgaria was restructured on an industrial basis within a short term. Over 60% of the vineyards had wide rows and high stems that allowed cultivation using industrial methods. The varietal structure of the vineyards was greatly improved, as along with the local varieties Pamid, Gamza, Mavrud, Shiroka Melnishka vine, Dimyat and Red Misket, cultivation started of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Rkatsiteli, Riesling, Misket Ottonel, Aligoté, Chardonnay, Ugni Blanc, etc. Newly introduced and newly created early dessert varieties such as Cardinal, Super Ran Bolgar, Brestovitse and others were spread on a wide scale. In 1969, vineyards covered a total area of 2007 thousand decares. In 1965, the average yield was 624 kg/decare for wine varieties and 927 kg/decare for dessert

varieties. In the same year, Bulgaria exported 265,000 tonnes of table grapes, occupying the world's first position in exports.

At present, according to data of Bulgaria's Executive Agency for Vine and Wine (EAVW), the grapes and wine produced in Bulgaria for 2015 amounted respectively to 195,860 tonnes and 136,680,527 litres, for 2016 – 174,603 tonnes and 127,770,270 litres. For 2017, the total quantity of wine produced in industrial conditions was 1,079,897 hectolitres.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

The favourable geographic location and mild climate have, since ancient times, attracted various Thracian and Slavic tribes to settle in the lands of Haskovo region. The making and use of wine have grown to be one of the pillars of the traditional Thracian culture and the ancient Thracians were famous for their wines throughout the ancient world. Remnants of this period are the so-called “sharapanas” - Thracian wineries consisting of rock basins with a sloping bottom and joining channels used for wine production.

Today, Haskovo District is classified as part of one of Bulgaria's five wine-growing regions - the southern wine-growing region characterized by the cultivation of red grape varieties with excellent taste properties – Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Rubin, and some white varieties.

The country's wine-growing regions are officially defined in the Bulgarian legislation. In the Act on Wine and Alcoholic Beverages (in effect as of Sept 16, 2012, amended and supplemented in the State Gazette, Issue No. 26 of 21 March 2014) the term "wine-growing region" is defined as follows: "A wine-growing region" is a set of territories with homogeneous and specific natural conditions, with a characteristic group of grape varieties and cultivation technologies and with well-established wine-growing traditions".

Bulgaria's territory is typically divided into five wine-growing regions, each of them characterized by its specific features and peculiarities.

1. **Eastern wine-growing region** – encompasses The Black Sea Coast and part of the northeast Danube Plain. It offers the best conditions for growing white wine varieties. Many of the good Bulgarian white wines are produced here from the varieties Chardonnay, Aligoté, Dimyat, Riesling, Traminer, Muscat Ottonel, Tamyanka, Ugni Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc.
2. **Northern wine-growing region** – encompasses the Danubian Plain and the north-western parts of the country. The Danubian Plain is divided into three parts - the Danube belt, Central part and Northwest part. Wide-spread varieties here are Muscat Ottonel, Misket from Vratsa, Tamyanka, Dimyat, Aligote, Rkatsiteli, Gamza, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pamid and Cinsault.
3. **South-western wine-growing region** – encompasses the valley of the Struma River south of the town of Dupnitsa, as the bigger wineries are located in Damianitsa, Sandanski, Blagoevgrad, Petrich and the village of Hursovo, where

the typical Bulgarian variety Shiroka Melnishka (broad-leaved Melnik vine) is grown. One can taste the popular Melnik wine in its hometown Melnik as well as in Sandanski and Bansko.

4. **Sub-Balkan wine-growing region** - encompasses the so-called Valley of Thracian Kings located between the mountains of Stara Planina and Sredna Gora. It is divided into two sub-regions - East and West. Typical varieties in the region are Red Misket, Riesling, Rkatsiteli, Chardonnay, Muscat, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot. The wineries are located in Karlovo, Sliven, Shivachevo, Sungurlare, Slavyantsi, Lozarevo, Grozden, Straldzha, Karnobat, Venets, Yambol.
5. **Southern wine-growing region** - encompasses the regions near Plovdiv, Haskovo, Pazardzhik, Stara Zagora, Lyubimets and Harmanli - the region of the Upper Thracian Plain and part of Sakar Mountain. The protection from big frosts and winds, which Stara Planina Mountain provides from the north, favours the cultivation of red varieties with excellent taste properties - Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Rubin. The soils and climatic conditions here are suitable for the cultivation also of some white varieties. In the regions around Asenovgrad, Pazardzhik and Perushtitsa, the unique Bulgarian variety Mavrud is grown. Major wine cellars are based in Asenovgrad, Haskovo, Brestovitsa, Stara Zagora and Lyubimets.

According to data of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests, the areas covered with vineyards in the South Central Region with the districts of Kardjali, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Smolyan and Haskovo amount to 16 583 ha². Plovdiv and Haskovo are among the areas with the highest share of wine grape varieties (see Chart 12). For its part, Haskovo district has enormous potential for the development of the wine-growing sector. The area has been known for a long time with its excellent grapes and the high-quality wine produced by them. To date, all the wine-making facilities on the territory of the region are specialized in the production of high-quality wines, which are very successful on the international market. As a result of the combination of favourable climatic conditions and increased technological skills of the local wine-makers, the Merlot wines have earned a high reputation in the region with their controlled name of origin and declared geographic region. An important indicator for the prosperity of the wine industry in the past years is the opening of many new wineries with state-of-the-art equipment - grape reception and processing lines, vinificators for white and red wines with fermentation process control, vinimatics, high-tech and fully automated bottling lines. An exceptionally positive trend is the fact that, as part of their strategy, wine companies invest in planting their own young vineyards with the classic varieties Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as some valuable Bulgarian varieties. The largest wine companies in the region are: Wine House Sakar AD in Lyubimets,

² Production of grapes and wine - vintage 2016, MAF, May, 2017

http://www.mzh.government.bg/media/filer_public/2018/02/22/ra327-publicationvinewine2016.pdf

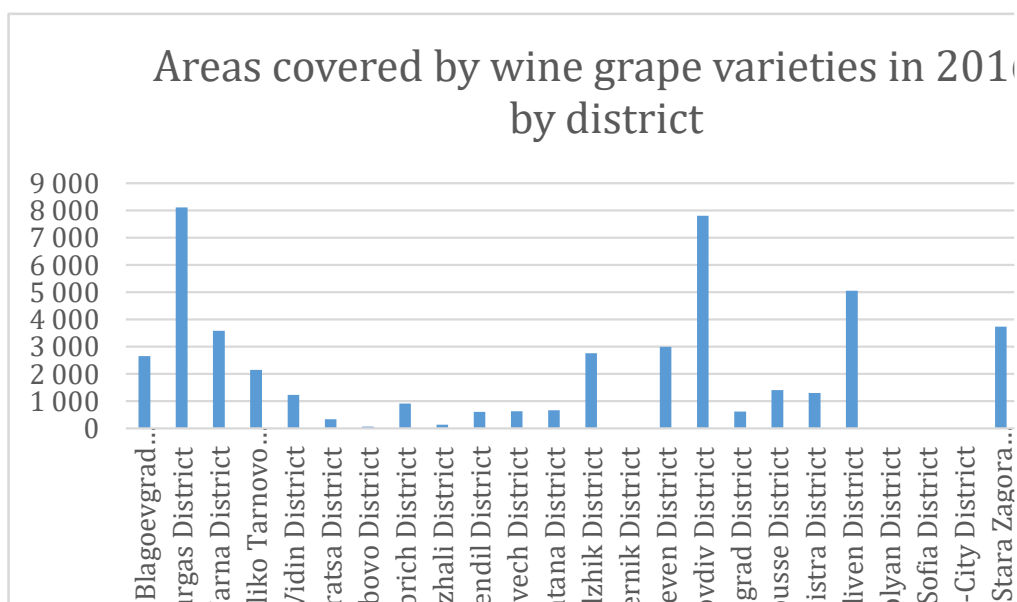
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Katarzyna Estate in Svilengrad, Terra Tangra Winery in Harmanli, Stambolovo Winepy, Yamantiev’s Winery in Ivaylovgrad, Bratanov Family Winery and Vineyards, Malkata Zvezda Winery, Castra Rubra Winery, etc.

WINE GRAPE VARIETIES

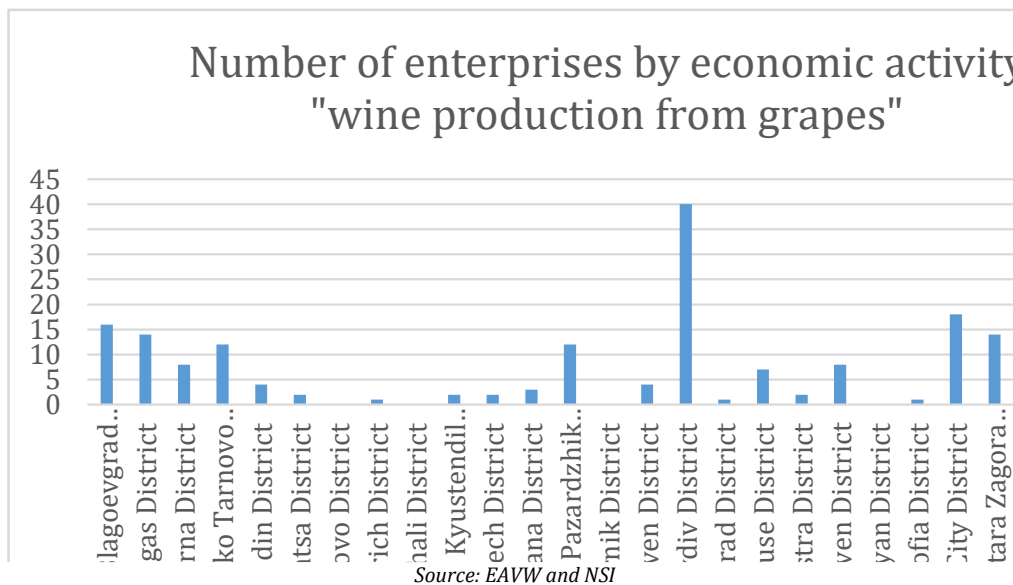
Many traditional wine varieties are grown in Haskovo District such as Merlot, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Cabernet Franc as well as varieties unique to Bulgaria such as Pamid, Dimyat, Rubin, Mavrud and Red Misket (See Annex 2.2 Systematized information on wine-making traditions in the Haskovo region).

Chart 12



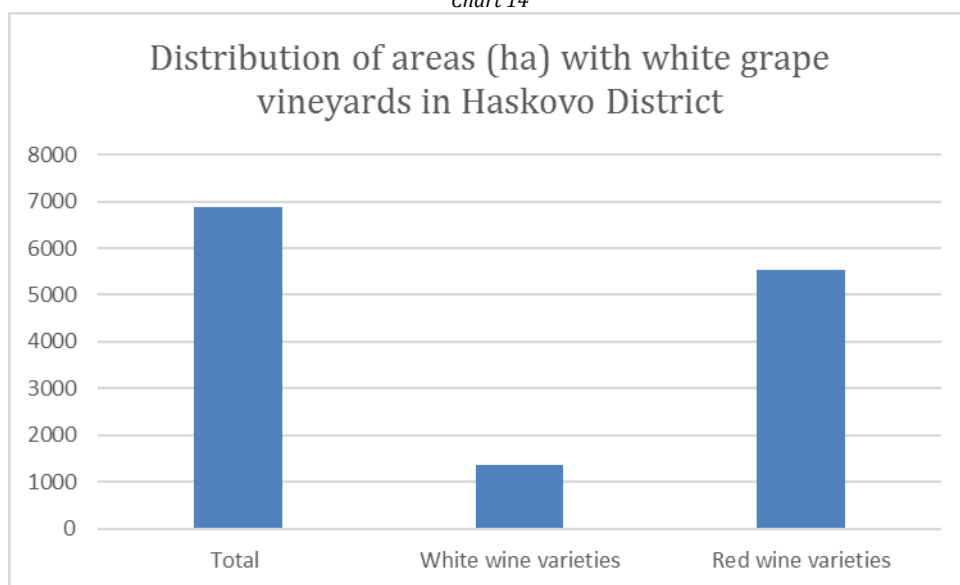
As can be seen, Haskovo District with its 6,885.5 hectares is among the administrative districts with the largest share of areas occupied by wine grape varieties, along with Burgas and Plovdiv districts (respectively 8,108.4 ha and 7,802.2 ha respectively). As regards the number of enterprises involved in economic activity “11.02.Production of wine from grapes” (according to the Classification of Economic Activities 2008), Plovdiv District ranks first with its 40 enterprises, followed by Haskovo and Blagoevgrad districts with 18 and 16 respectively.

Chart 13



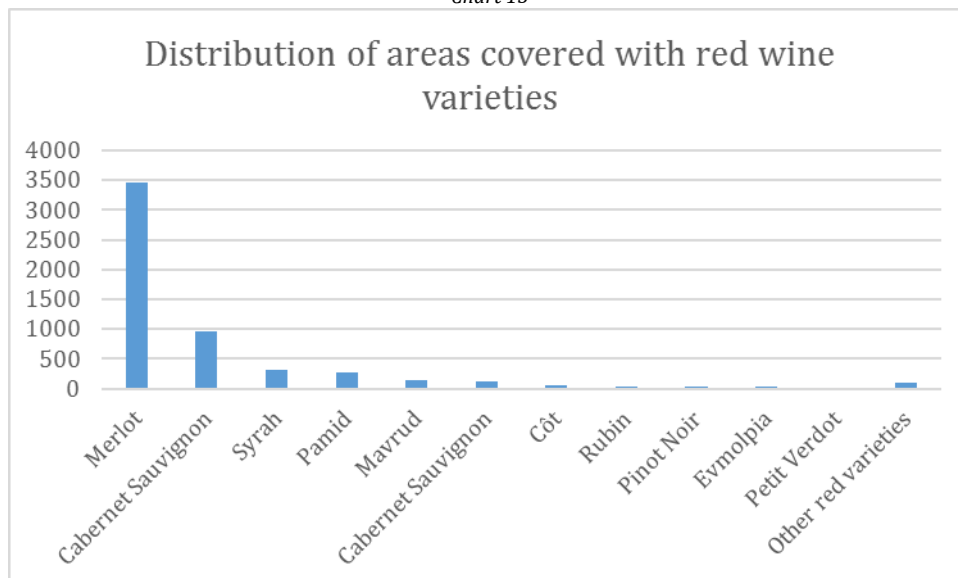
Of the total 6,885.5 ha of land covered by vineyards in Haskovo District, the areas covered by red wine varieties (5,520 hectares) are several times larger than those of white varieties (1,366 ha).

Chart 14



Several types of red wine varieties are grown on the territory of Haskovo District, as the first place is occupied by Merlot with 3,456 ha, followed by Cabernet Sauvignon with 957 ha, Syrah with 313 ha, Pamid with 267 ha, Mavrud with 135 ha, Cabernet Franc with 122 ha, Côt with 691 ha, Rubin with 41 ha, Pinot Noir with 29 ha, etc.

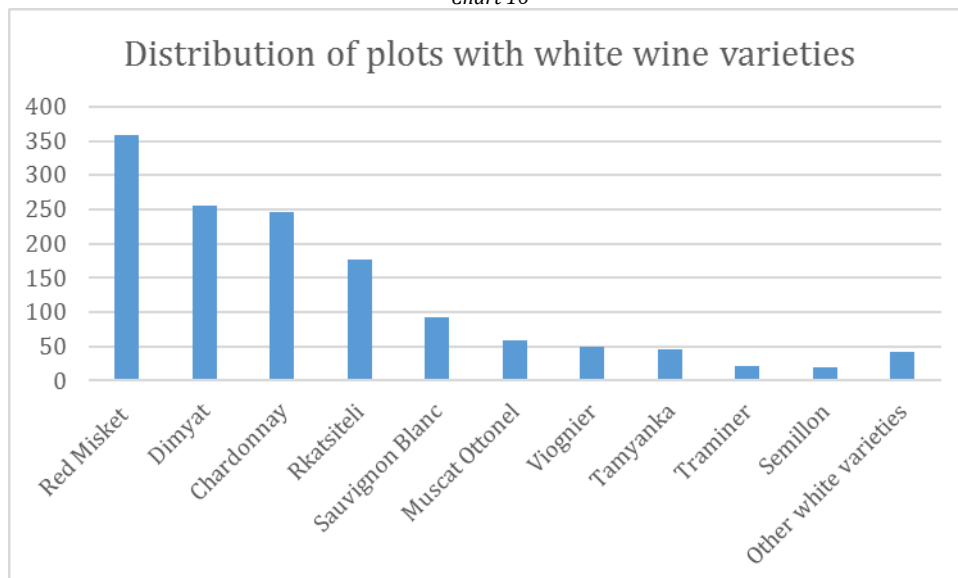
Chart 15



Source: EAVW and MAFF, Agrostistics Department

Out of the white wine varieties, the first place goes to Red Misket with occupied areas of 359 ha, Dimyat with 256 ha, Chardonnay with 246 ha, Rkatsiteli with 177 ha, Sauvignon Blanc - 92 ha, Muscat Ottonel - 59 ha, Viognier - 49 ha, Tamyanka - 45 ha, Traminer - 21 ha, Semillon - 19 ha and others.

Chart 16



Source: EAVW and MAFF, Agrostistics Department

UNIQUE WINE VARIETIES

Among the unique wine grape varieties in Haskovo region most prominent are **Red Misket, Dimyat, Rubin, Mavrud and Pamid.**

RED MISKET

Red Misket is an old Bulgarian grape variety spread mostly in the Sub-Balkan region. It is the most frost-resistant Bulgarian variety. Its wine is interesting in colour with pink hues. There is evidence that this is a hybrid variety created by blending Riesling and Dimyat. Its aroma bears nuances of herbs, quince and honey. Red Misket wine can be tasted in the wineries in the region of Straldzha and Sungurlare. The areas occupied with Red Misket in the district of Haskovo amount to 359 ha.

RUBIN

Rubin is a local variety created by crossing two varieties - Nebbiolo and Syrah. Its wines are saturated in colour, and the taste is dense, with a soft finish. The aroma is intense, fruity, dominated by ripe blackberries, and when stored in oak barrels it develops jam-like nuances. The areas covered with the Rubin variety in the district of Haskovo are 41 ha.

DIMYAT

Dimyat is a typical Bulgarian white variety used for the production of dry white and aromatic wines and brandy. It develops a fruity aroma with strong nuances of ripe peach. The taste is light, with a pleasing freshness. It is best grown in the region of Varna, but is cultivated also in other parts of the country (Haskovo district). The areas covered by Dimyat are 256 ha.

MAVRUD

Mavrud is a very old local variety that has a rich purple-red colour and boasts excellent palatability and high density. The aroma is mellow, dominated by ripe berries and spices. It develops very well in the presence of oak. Areas occupied by Mavrud amount to 135 ha.

PAMID

Pamid is one of the oldest varieties growing on Bulgarian lands. It is spread throughout the Balkan Peninsula under different names. It is suitable for wine production and direct consumption. The wine produced by Pamid is light-red in colour. The fragrances are fresh, with fruity shades, elegant body and a soft finish. It is consumed young due to its low content of phenolic substances and does not respond well to oak contact. It is often used in coupage wines. Areas covered by Mavrud amount to 267 ha.

Several wineries in Haskovo district offer opportunities for tasting the unique wines of the region of superb quality.

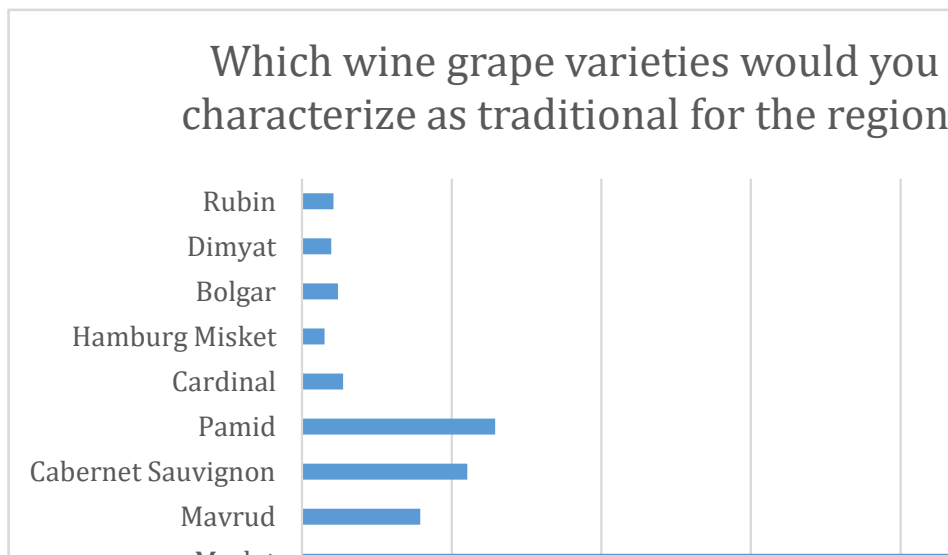
TYPICAL WINE GRAPE VARIETIES FOR THE REGION AND EVALUATION OF THEIR ADDED VALUE TO THE REGION'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As we have already mentioned, Haskovo district is one of the regions with the highest share of wine grape varieties in the Republic of Bulgaria, with many traditional varieties grown in the territory. According to data of the EAVW and the Agrostatics Department with the Agriculture Ministry, among the red wine grape varieties the highest share goes to Merlot with 3456 ha, followed respectively by Cabernet Sauvignon with 957 ha, Syrah with 313 ha, Pamid with 267 ha, Mavrud with 135 ha, Cabernet Franc with 122 ha, Côt with 691 ha, Rubin with 41 ha, Pinot Noir with 29 ha, etc. Among white wine grape varieties the highest share goes to Red Misket 359 ha, Dimyat with 256 ha, Chardonnay with 246 ha, Rkatsiteli with 177 ha, Sauvignon Blanc – 92 ha, Muscat Ottonel - 59 ha, Viognier - 49 ha, Tamyanka - 45 ha, Traminer - 21 ha, Semillion - 19 ha, etc. Out of the seven varieties unique for Bulgaria - Red Misket, Gamza, Dimyat, Rubin, Mavrud, Pamid, Широка Melnishka vine, five can be found in Haskovo District.

The finding that Haskovo District has enormous potential for the development of the wine-growing sector is also confirmed by the survey conducted among the population. Almost half of the respondents (47.4%) refer to viticulture and wine-making as the most profit-yielding agricultural activity at the moment. Overall, this is the highest share and shows not only the financial dimensions of the activity but also the cultural and moral value of wine-growing for the respondents.

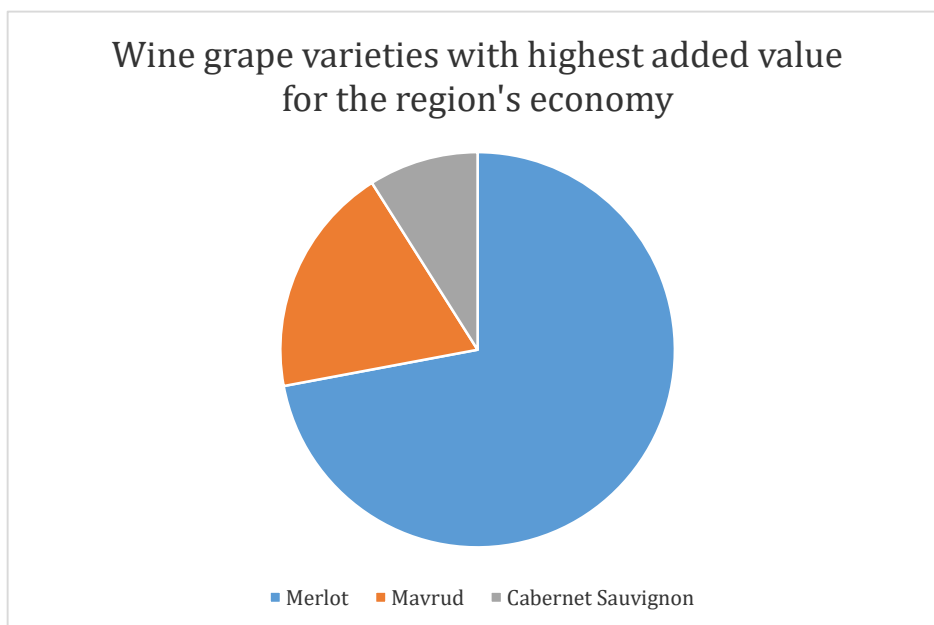
A significant part of the respondents - over $\frac{3}{4}$ - have given an answer to the question of which wine varieties they perceive as traditional. The list is headed by Merlot (87%) and ends with Rubin (4.2%). It should be noted here that the Merlot variety has a much wider area of production than Haskovo region, but the respondents refer to the properties of the Merlot from their respective sub-region as they are advertised on the market (for example, Merlot from Stambolovo, etc.). Among the respondents' preferences interest is clearly manifested not only in wine varieties, but also in the dessert varieties.

Chart 17



A significant share of the respondents (48%) also answer the question about which varieties have the potential for the highest added value for the economic development of the area, as the list here includes only three varieties. Obviously in this selection, people rely more on the mass popularity and preferences (Merlot), than on the specificity (the varieties Mavrud, Pamid, Red Misket) – i.e. people believe that something which is more well-known and a favourite among lovers of wine, can attract more people than something more specific, albeit more unique – or in other words, the target group of Merlot wines is much wider than that of Mavrud, respectively there is greater economic potential for them (see chart below). Among the grape varieties with the highest added value, we can also point to Red Misket and Dimyat.

Chart 18



The perception among local people of Haskovo District as part of a main wine-growing region in the country at the moment, with traditions and great potential for boosting tourism, is clearly registered through the high degree of consensus with the listed statements. At the same time, they give a lower assessment to the extent to which Haskovo region has been promoted with these assets and they are well-known to the national public, i.e. they still have unused potential due to lack of awareness.

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?	Rating (1-7) High score (5-7)
Wine-growing can greatly stimulate the development of tourism in Haskovo district	5.69
Wine-growing is a traditional livelihood for people in Haskovo district.	5.54
Haskovo district is currently one of the main wine-growing regions in Bulgaria.	5.50
The wine-growing features of Haskovo are sufficiently well-known nation-wide.	4.53

Respondents give high scores for the degree of preservation of traditional practices for growing wine grape varieties (5.62), which is a higher score for the degree of preservation in comparison with that of culinary traditions (4.78).

	Rating (1-7) High score (5-7)
To what extent have the practices for growing traditional wine varieties in Haskovo district been preserved?	5.62
To what extent have the local culinary traditions in Haskovo district been preserved?	4.78

According to respondents, wineries, wine cellars, and wine tasting opportunities can

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attract visitors to the region to the highest extent, as for this purpose they attach more importance to the organization of the events rather than to local cuisine itself.

To what extent can tourists from Bulgaria and abroad be attracted to the area by any of the following:	Rating (1-7) High score (5-7)
wineries, wine cellars, wine tasting opportunities	5.60
culinary events and customs, festivals	5.53
local cuisine	5.38

EXAMINED POSSIBILITIES FOR PROMOTING HASKOVO AS A WINE-GROWING REGION

The global supply of wine is becoming increasingly important, especially in the European market segment. This leads to lower transportation and bottling costs, as glass in the European Union is cheaper than in other wine-producing countries. Wine on tap is increasingly marketed as a commodity, as the brands remain the same on the consumer level but with different components behind it. This makes European buyers less concerned about the origin of the wine, and this in turn provides opportunities for all wine producers in Bulgaria and, in particular, in Haskovo district.

The reverse aspect of the increased global supply is the quest for authenticity among wine consumers. There is a growing awareness of the authenticity among the more discerning customers in terms of traditional wine-making and viticulture, the use of endemic grape varieties, even the way in which the wine is transported and packaged. Producers in developing countries have to overcome the feeling of doubt among consumers about the product's origin, new varieties, the exotic image and fair working conditions at the production facilities. One way is to prove authenticity through certification schemes or geographical indications of a product³. A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used to identify a product as originating in the territory of a particular country, region or locality where its quality, reputation or other characteristic is related to its geographical origin. Geographical indication can serve as a valuable tool for distinguishing local products (wines and foodstuffs) from competitive ones. In this way, the market will be more comfortable with the integrity of the label and less concerned about smuggling, counterfeiting or illegal blending.

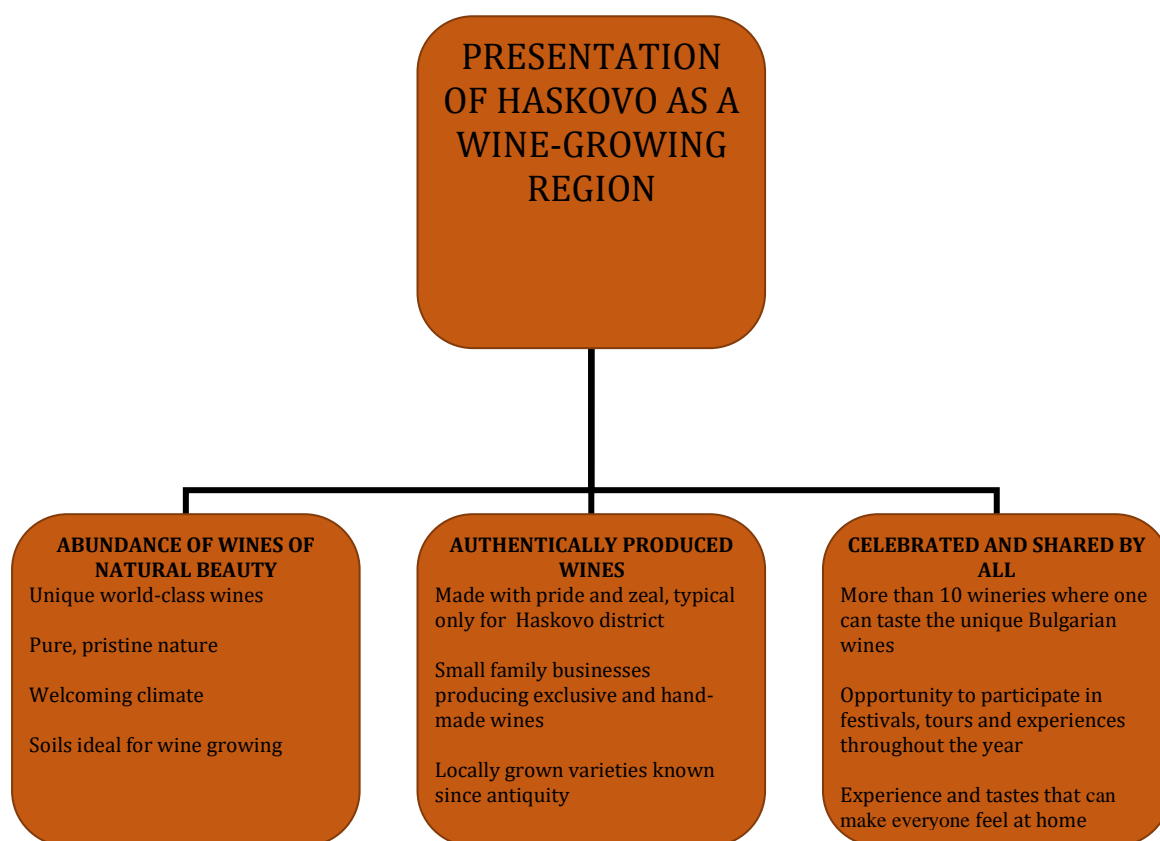
Census surveys in Europe show that the Old Continent is facing an aging population. By 2050, about 28% of the European population is expected to be at the age of 65 years and older, compared to 19% in 2015. This aging population is a growing niche on the European wine market. In principle, consumers in this niche drink less wine, but more frequently. Therefore, the combination of spa/recreational and even food tourism could significantly increase the number of tourists in the Haskovo region. On the other hand, young wine consumers, so-called millennials (people born between 1982 and 2000) are often perceived as more adventurous in their tastes. They crave to experience new regions with affordable pricing and wine. Their influence on the wine market is

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/food-safety-and-quality/certification/quality-labels>

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increasingly growing. A British survey reveals that they view wine as a social drink and the wine they purchase accounts for 29% of the total volume of traded wine (Wine Intelligence, 2016). The wine industry will have to respond better to their needs, requiring a stronger focus on experience and emotional engagement with consumers in communications. Being visible in social media can be an important strategy for promoting local wine production. It might be a good idea to focus on countries importing wine and not having a large-scale internal or well-established traditional wine production like Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Scandinavian countries, but also Germany. The millennials on these markets are more open to experimental wines, but they are generally not very loyal to the brand. They are constantly looking for a new and unique experience. In order to satisfy the demand for unique experiences, one could suggest ways to combine it with cultural tourism or any other type of tourism, and this, in turn, could contribute to the region’s economic prosperity.

Based on what has been written so far and taking into consideration the world trends in wine production, we suggest the following **opportunities for promoting Haskovo region as a wine-growing region**:



OPTIONS FOR COMBINING WITH CULTURAL, GASTRONOMIC, ECO (GREEN TOURISM, ALTERNATIVE TOURISM, ORGANIC PRODUCTS) AND HEALTHCARE (BALNEO, SPA AND WELLNESS), FESTIVAL, HUNTING AND OTHER TYPES OF TOURISM

Haskovo District could be promoted as a wine-growing region with its traditional and unique wines at the following events:

- ❖ World Bulk Wine Exhibition held annually in Amsterdam;
- ❖ Wine Festival in Basel, Switzerland, which takes place annually in late October and early November;
- ❖ Wine Expo held annually in October in Warsaw, Poland;
- ❖ Wine Festival in Krakow, Poland, held annually in November;
- ❖ Expo Drink and Wine held annually in October - November in Bucharest, Romania;
- ❖ Salon du Vin in Sofia, Bulgaria, also held annually at the end of the year;
- ❖ Event with an emphasis on technologies for producing wine, fruit juices and agricultural crops in Stuttgart, Germany, which is held once every two years;
- ❖ Sparkling Wine Technology Exhibition held annually in mid-October in Epernay, France;
- ❖ Salon Internacional del Club de Gourmets and Wine Festival held annually in April in Madrid, Spain;
- ❖ International Wine Festival held annually in March in London, UK;
- ❖ International Trade Fair for viticulture, oenology and technologies for olive growing and oil production annually held at the end of February in Verona, Italy;
- ❖ Wine Exhibition held annually in May in Vilnius, Lithuania;
- ❖ International Wine Fair which takes place every two years in May in Brno, Czech Republic, and others.

In conclusion, we can summarize the following – Haskovo has enormous potential as a wine-growing region with exceptionally favourable conditions for the development of wine tourism, but this potential is not yet well-developed. At present, there are quite a few actions but still insufficient for the promotion of wine routes to different wine-making centres, which combine the visit to a winery with other attractions. In comparison, 5% of tourist destinations in Italy for 2012 were selected because of the local food and wine, as 64.3% were foreign tourists and 35.7% Italians. Budget revenue from food and wine tourism was steadily growing, reaching a turnover of about five billion in 2012.⁴ This is why, in an effort to promote culinary and wine routes, the Italian National Tourist Board currently takes measures to search for local recipes passed down from generation to generation and to raise funds for media campaigns, emphasizing on the good taste qualities of the local wines. Italy's tourist sector tops the

⁴ "A new economic model for Italian farms: wine and food tourism", Journal of Management of Knowledge, Economics and Information Technology, Special Edition, 2013.

http://www.scientificpapers.org/wp-content/files/16_Lanfranchi-A_New_Economic_Model_for_Italian_Farms_the_Wine_Food_Tourism.pdf

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e-mail: maritza@maritza.info
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international charts mainly thanks to the preserved traditions concerning local food and wine (Italia Corporate Annual Report, 2012) ⁵.

VII. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ANNEX 2.1. SYSTEMATIZED INFORMATION ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL CULINARY FEATURES OF HASKOVO DISTRICT

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⁵ Gastronomic Cities: City Strategy on Gastronomy as a Tool for Tourism and Employment Development, survey of 2014

http://www.urbact.eu/sites/default/files/media/gastronomic_cities_baseline_study_final.pdf

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