

**COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION****of 21 November 2018****on the publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* of the application for registration of a geographical indication in the spirit drinks sector referred to in Article 17 of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council****‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’**

(2018/C 435/05)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 1576/89 <sup>(1)</sup>, and in particular Article 17(6) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) The Republic of Bulgaria has sent an application for registration of the name ‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’ in Annex III of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 as geographical indication in accordance with Article 17(1) of that Regulation.
- (2) In accordance with Articles 17(5) and 17(6) of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 the Commission has examined that application and concluded that it fulfils the conditions laid down in that Regulation.
- (3) In order to allow for the submission of oppositions in accordance with Article 17(7) of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, the main specifications of the technical file referred to in Article 17(4) of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 for the name ‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’ should be published in the *Official Journal of the European Union*,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

*Sole Article*

The main specifications of the technical file referred to in Article 17(4) of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 for the name ‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’ is contained in the Annex to this Decision.

In accordance with Article 17(7) of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, the publication of this Decision shall confer the right to oppose to the registration of the name specified in the first paragraph of this Article within six months from the date of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Done at Brussels, 21 November 2018.

*For the Commission*

Phil HOGAN

*Member of the Commission*

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 39, 13.2.2008, p. 16.

## ANNEX

## MAIN SPECIFICATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL FILE

**File number: PGI-BG-01867 — 7.1.2014****1. Geographical indication to be registered**

‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’

**2. Category of the spirit drink**

Винена дестилатна спиртна напитка/Wine spirit

**3. Description of the spirit drink****3.1. Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics**

‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’ is a wine spirit that has a sparkling, clear, pale yellow colour, a pleasant and dominant fruity aroma, and a harmonious, mild taste with a pronounced grapey aftertaste. Limited editions of the drink are matured for at least six months in oak barrels with a capacity of up to 1 000 litres. Contact with the oak intensifies the colour, imparts sweetness, emphasises the mildness and enriches the aroma with a discernible oaky nuance, while providing a hint of vanilla in the finish.

The drink has a minimum alcoholic strength of 40 % vol.

**3.2. Specific characteristics (compared to other spirit drinks of the same category)**

‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’ is a wine spirit having a minimum alcoholic strength of 40 % vol., with a volatile compound content of 132-174 g/hl a.a., including 6-24 g/hl a.a. of esters and 2-8 g/hl a.a. of aldehydes, and a methanol content of 0,07-0,140 g/l. The values for its physico-chemical characteristics exceed the minimum values specified in the rules on the wine spirits category.

‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’ is a wine spirit that is obtained from white and red grape varieties. The grapes are received for processing in single-variety batches. In order to obtain good-quality white wines for distillation, the grapes are harvested once they are technically ripe, but before they become overripe, when they have a sugar content of 16-19 % and the acid content is higher, i.e. at least 500 g/hl, expressed as tartaric acid. Practice has shown that robust white wines with a higher acid content yield delicate distillates with a pronounced fruity aroma. The white grapes, grown on sandy, stony soils, acquire a well-developed fruity aroma, which, thanks to appropriate processing, becomes fixed in the wine and the distillates.

The red grape varieties are harvested when they have a sugar content of 18-20 % or more and acid content of at least 600 g/hl, expressed as tartaric acid. The red varieties have primary aromas that are rather plant-like; and they yield wines with a stronger taste. When distilled, they yield distillates with an intense, harmonious taste and a pronounced grapey aftertaste that is characteristic of the wine spirit ‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’.

Distillates with clear ageing potential are matured in oak barrels made from the wood of the local Strandzha oak (*Quercus hartwissiana* Stev.). Contact with the wood enriches the colour and results in the development of a refined taste and delicate aroma in the matured drink.

**4. Geographical indication to be registered (Geographical area concerned)**

The geographical area in which ‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol’ wine spirit is produced covers Yambol province and part of the neighbouring province of Burgas and includes the following localities (*zemlishta*):

— Yambol municipality — one locality: the town of Yambol;

— Straldzha municipality — seven localities: Straldzha and the villages of Zimnitsa, Irechekovo, Kamenets, Lozenets, Nedyalsko and Parvenets;

— Tundzha municipality — twelve localities: the villages of Bezmer, Botevo, General Inzovo, General Toshevo, Kalchevo, Kozarevo, Meden Kladenets, Pobeda, Roza, Tenevo, Hadzhi Dimitrovo and Chargan;

- Bolyarovo municipality — two localities: the town of Bolyarovo and the village of Stefan Karadzhofo;
- Elhovo municipality — five localities: the town of Elhovo and the villages of Granitovo, Malomirovo, Melnitsa and Malak Manastir;
- Kameno municipality — one locality: the village of Troyanovo;
- Aytos municipality — one locality: the village of Topolnitsa;
- Sredets municipality — one locality: the village of Zornitsa;
- Topolovgrad municipality — one locality: the village of Oreshnik.

#### 5. Method for obtaining the spirit drink

‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozдова rakya ot Yambol’ wine spirit is produced in the geographical area set out above, from grapes of the following varieties:

- White: Rikat, Bolgar, Cherven Misket, Dimyat, Chardonnay, Ugni Blanc, Prosecco, Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier;
- Red: Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pamid, Syrah and Cabernet Franc.

When delivered, they are sorted by weight, appearance, variety and sugar content. Only top-quality grapes are used. The grapes are harvested by hand and placed in plastic buckets or crates. The use of containers with a capacity of more than 15 litres for harvesting is not allowed. The grapes are transported for processing without any packaging in insulated metal containers of an appropriate design and capacity. Most often, proportionate samples are collected from each vehicle by hand, and the external appearance, general condition and varietal purity are assessed, and the sugar content is measured using a hydrometer. Processing takes place within 12–24 hours of harvesting. The grapes are first crushed to remove the stems and then pressed. The grape pulp is transferred to special fermentation tanks, where it is macerated, if necessary, to enrich it with aromatic substances extracted from the grape skins. The free-run juice is drained off and the pulp is pressed. Over-pressing is not permitted. The requirement that no more than 75 litres of wine for use in the production of ‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozдова rakya ot Yambol’ wine spirit be produced from 100 kg of grapes is strictly complied with. The next step is alcoholic fermentation. Pure wine yeast cultures are used. The process is controlled, and at least twice in every 24-hour period samples are taken from each fermentation tank, the sugar content and temperature are measured, and changes to the organoleptic properties are monitored. Secondary alcoholic fermentation takes place in reinforced steel tanks with different capacities. The wines are carefully decanted. Distillation takes place as soon as possible after the sediments (lees) have been separated. The stills used to produce ‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozдова rakya ot Yambol’ wine spirit are type K5 and type DK-1 continuous stills. They are of Bulgarian design. Their characteristic features are as follows:

Each of the stills comprises a distillation (fractionating) column, dephlegmators, a condenser, a cooler, a bubble cap, a horizontal wine heater and a level regulator. After the system is switched on, the column, dephlegmators and wine heater are heated up by introducing steam. When distilled water begins to flow from the cooler, wine is fed in for distilling. Rising from the bottom up, the water vapours come into contact, in a countercurrent, with the wine and are enriched with ethyl alcohol and volatile substances. The water and alcohol vapours from the upper part of the distillation column reach the dephlegmators and condenser, where their alcohol content increases to 62–65 % vol. The wine distillate obtained after cooling trickles out via the bubble cap, where its alcohol content and the temperature are continuously monitored by means of an alcoholmeter.

The resulting distillates are categorised. They are then stored, without any contact with wood, in stainless steel vessels of suitable design and capacity or in reinforced-concrete tanks. The organoleptic profiles are determined by the grapes from which they are derived and the method by which they have been processed. The white grape varieties yield delicate distillates which have a sparkling clarity and a pronounced, strong fruity aroma. Red grape varieties are processed into distillates which have a sparkling clarity, a stronger taste, mildness and a lingering grapey aftertaste. When producing non-matured ‘Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozдова rakya ot Yambol’, the blending (coupage) of distillates is a technical operation that is key to determining the qualities of the finished product. Experienced practitioners use tried-and-tested good production practices and blend distillates in the appropriate proportions, adding demineralised drinking water to correct the alcohol content to 40 % vol.

Most distillates are stored without contact with oak. The colour of the non-matured drink is corrected by adding caramel.

The product obtained is of a consistently high quality, with organoleptic characteristics that remain stable from one year — and one harvest — to another, in other words 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit with a straw yellow colour, a pronounced fruity aroma, a mild and harmonious taste and an exceptionally pleasant grapey aftertaste.

The best-quality distillates that have the necessary potential are matured for at least six months in oak barrels which have a capacity of up to 1 000 litres and staves that are 3-4 cm thick. The barrels are made from the wood of the Strandzha oak, a tree which is typical of the area.

The blending (coupage), dilution and bottling of 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit is not confined to the defined geographical area in which the product is obtained.

## 6. Link with the geographical environment or origin

### 6.1. Details of the geographical area or origin relevant to the link

In the early 20th century, vine cultivation and the production of wines and wine spirits evolved from being a traditional craft into a major industry of the young Bulgarian state. 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit began to be produced in numerous small distilleries in the area during the 1930s.

The industrial production and marketing of 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit may be considered to have truly begun in 1974, in the wine vaults in Yambol. The nearby cooperatives had sufficient vines to provide the raw materials needed for the production not only of wines but also of 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit.

The changes that established a democratic system in Bulgaria (in 1989) were followed by the full restitution of agricultural land. The geographical area where 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit is produced has soils and climatic conditions that are favourable for the cultivation of vines. Old vineyards were restored and new ones planted. The varietal diversity of the vines was improved. Varieties new to the area around Yambol, e.g. Prosecco, Viognier, Syrah and Cabernet franc, were planted. Different varieties have different characteristics. Appropriate processing results in white and red wines for distillation each of which possesses different potential and contributes the distinctive features of the grape variety concerned to the aroma and taste. The human factor has an important role to play in the application of the established technology used to obtain this drink. Experienced practitioners distil the drink using type K5 and type DK-1 continuous stills until an alcoholic strength of 62-65 % vol. is reached. This distillation method maximises the capture and retention in the distillates of the volatile substances from the wines, which are responsible for the fruity aroma, and of their taste components. The blending (coupage) of suitable distillates in the correct proportions results in a finished product that is of a consistent, uniformly high quality and has stable organoleptic properties.

'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit is the subject of advertising campaigns, presentations and tasting sessions organised by large retail chains; it has been presented at international trade fairs, exhibitions and competitions, winning numerous awards and distinctions. Over the years, 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit has received numerous awards, namely gold medals and certificates of distinction, at the Vinaria International Exhibition in Plovdiv.

### 6.2. Specific characteristics of the spirit drink attributable to the geographical area

The vineyards from which the raw materials used to produce 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit are obtained are located in the south-eastern part of the Southern (Thracian Lowlands/Trakiyska Nizina) wine region (municipalities of Bolyarovo, Elhovo, Straldzha, Tundzha, Yambol and Topolovgrad), and the western part of the Eastern (Black Sea/Chernomorski) wine region (municipalities of Aytos, Kameno and Sredets). The geographical area covers the Tundzha-Straldzha sub-region and reaches as far as the northern slopes of the Strandzha and Sakar massifs.

The geographical area where 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit is produced has soils and climatic conditions that are good for growing vines. The terrain comprises plains and hills, with an average elevation of 190 m. Its geographical location means that there is an interweaving of several climatic influences, the strongest of which is the transitional continental climate that is typical of the Upper Thracian Lowlands. The influence of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean is less pronounced. The temperatures recorded here make it one of the warmest areas in Bulgaria. The average temperatures in January, the coldest month, are between 0 °C and 1,5 °C. The average January temperature is 0,2 °C in Yambol, and 1,2 °C in Elhovo, which illustrates the difference between the transitional continental and the transitional Mediterranean climatic zones during the coldest month. The entire area lies to the south of the 0 °C isotherm, which ensures a long frost-free period and normal vegetation conditions for plants. The area has 180-210 frost-free days per year. On average, temperatures remain above 10 °C from about 10 April, which is beneficial for crop growth. On average, the area receives 2 200-2 250 hours of sunshine, and the temperature sum during the growing season is approximately 3 500-3 800 °C. Summers are relatively hot and bear the hallmarks of a continental climate. The average July temperature in the area is 23 °C. The absolute maximum temperature is 44,4 °C, and the average of the maximum temperatures is 38-40 °C.

Autumns are long and often warm, with average temperatures remaining above 10 °C until the 25 October to 4 November period. On average, the first autumn frosts occur between 23 and 29 October, the very earliest date being 30 September. These agro-climatic conditions are conducive to the cultivation of permanent crops, and vines in particular. The relative humidity varies throughout the year. It is lowest (60-64 %) in July and August and highest (80-92 %) in December, January and February. Precipitation is unevenly spread throughout the year. The average total annual precipitation ranges from 530 to 700 mm.

The soils are moderately to mildly leached chernozem-vertisols; along the River Tundzha and its tributaries there are alluvial meadow soils; to the south-east and north-west of Elhovo leached vertisols predominate (the heaviest clayey and richly colloid soils in Bulgaria with a substantial black humus horizon when wet), along with leached brown (cinnamonic) forest soils that are generally poorer in humus; to the south brown (cinnamonic) forest soils with rankers and lithosols, leached brown (cinnamonic) forest soils and mineral-poor pseudopodzolic soils.

The combination of relief, soils and climate creates conditions for the production of good-quality grapes. The human factor plays a key role. Experienced practitioners convert the grapes into good-quality wine. This process combines centuries-old traditions with modern, cutting-edge technologies. The wines are distilled using special type K5 and type DK-1 continuous stills that were developed by Bulgarian designers. A specific feature of 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit is that distillation continues until a wine distillate with an alcoholic strength of up to 62-65 % vol. is obtained. Many years of experience have shown this to be the alcoholic strength of the distillate at which the capture of aromatic substances from the wines is greatest and a rich and balanced taste is achieved.

Distillates obtained from white and red grape varieties that have been matured in the drink's specified geographical area have mutually balancing organoleptic properties. Distillates obtained from white varieties have a pronounced fruity aroma, and those obtained from red varieties have a distinctive grapey taste. Blending (coupage) of the distillates yields a product of high quality with stable organoleptic characteristics: a pale yellow colour, a dominant fruity aroma, and a harmonious, mild taste with a pronounced grapey aftertaste.

The distillates with the best qualities and ageing potential are matured for at least six months in oak barrels made from the wood of the Strandzha oak (*Quercus hartwissiana* Stev.). The Strandzha oak (*Quercus hartwissiana* Stev.) is a deciduous tree that can grow to a height of up to 25 metres. This is a relict species which has survived since the time before the last Ice Age 1,5 million years ago. In Europe, its distribution is confined to the Strandzha massif. It is often found – in clusters or individually – on north-facing slopes and in lower-lying and damp areas, frequently alongside rivers and streams. It is a protected species and is listed in the Bulgarian Biodiversity Act. Generations of coopers have maintained the traditions of working this unique material. The wood of this tree, which is said to have 'its roots in stone', has a porous structure, but the pores are extremely small. Prolonged interaction with the distillates results not only in the evaporation of alcohol but also in the extraction of valuable components from the wood.

Limited editions of the drink are placed on the market after having had contact with oak for at least six months. The characteristic features of matured 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit are: a deep yellow colour, a dominant fruity aroma with discernible oaky notes and a hint of vanilla in the finish, a harmonious taste that is markedly mild and sweet, and a lingering and mild aftertaste.

## 7. European Union or national/regional provisions

National legislation does not lay down any additional specific provisions relating to 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit. The production and marketing of 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit are subject to the general requirements applicable to the 'Wine spirits' category laid down in the Wine and Spirit Drinks Act (ZVSN), published in State Gazette No 45/2012 and in force since 16 September 2012.

A wine spirit being a grape rakia with the geographical indication 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' was approved by Order No T-RD-27-20 of the Minister for the Economy and Energy of 27 November 2013, which has been published on the website of the Ministry of the Economy: <http://www.mi.government.bg/bg/library/zapowed-za-utvarjdavane-na-vinena-destilatna-spirtna-napitka-grozdova-rakiya-s-geografsko-ukazanie-ya-65-c28-m361-1.htm>

Wine spirit with the geographical indication 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' is subject to organoleptic assessment by the regional wine-tasting committee operating under the South-East Thrace (Yugoiztochna Trakiyska) Regional Vine and Wine Chamber, having its registered office and head office in Sliven.

## 8. Applicant

— Member State, third country or legal/natural person

Република България, Министерство на икономиката/Bulgaria, Ministry of the Economy

— Full address (street and number, town/city and postal code, country):

София 1052, ул. 'Славянска' № 8, Република България/ul. Slavyanska 8, 1052 Sofia, Bulgaria

— Legal status (in the case of legal persons)

## 9. Supplement to the geographical indication

## 10. Specific labelling rules

No specific mandatory labelling rules, other than horizontal ones, have been laid down for 'Ямболска гроздова ракия/Гроздова ракия от Ямбол/Yambolska grozdova rakya/Grozdova rakya ot Yambol' wine spirit.

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