



Press release  
For immediate release

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## The Native Grape Odyssey Program begins its Epic Journey of Rediscovery

**79 wine experts from Japan, Canada and Russia have signed on to take part in the educational program, the Native Grape Odyssey (NGO), an EU sponsored project set to be launched during the 2019 Vinitaly season. The program's intention is to promote the European oenological tradition and quality through courses, seminars and tastings, highlighting Italian and Greek native grape varieties and wines.**

The grand scale and popularity of Vinitaly offers the Native Grape Odyssey participants an excellent opportunity to network and meet other **wine professionals, experts and producers** from all over the world. The program will also afford attendees the luxury of tasting an abundance of wines, in particular high quality European wines.



# NATIVE GRAPE ODYSSEY

This project will run over a **three-year** period (2019–2021) and has been financed by the **European Union**. The mission goal will be to succeed in fostering increased awareness of **European PDO and PGI wines** with a particular focus on **Italian and Greek** products. Furthermore, the NGO project wants to draw attention to the craft and **high quality** of **European wine**, spreading this message around the world; to fulfil this aim, the project has concentrated its efforts on three key countries, **Japan, Canada, and Russia**. The program is jointly managed by [Unione Italiana Vini](#) (UIV) and the Greek [Zante Agricultural](#)

[Cooperatives Union](#), two important bodies that work to represent the entrepreneurial and professional activities in the food and wine industry in their own countries.

The image of Bacchus a. k. a. Dionysus, the celebrated archetype of wine and ecstasy, was chosen as the project's official logo to illustrate the **di-vine bridge between Greece and Italy**. The age old bond between these two regions has likewise been captured using imagery from the Odyssey, Homer's epic poem. The poem notably paints a picture of ancient viticulture and wine consumption in both regions. As Italian vine genetic scholar Attilio Scienza remarks in his latest book *La Stirpe del Vino* (Sperling and Kupfer, 2018), "*Ulysses (i.e. Odysseus) offers Polyphemus a strong, dark red wine from Ismaro in a town in Thrace.*" Moreover, coupled with the concept of a return journey, the poem provides a nice metaphor for the NGO participants as they embark on their own journey to rediscover European native grape origins.



Prof. Attilio Scienza, one of the world's leading experts in the field of Viticulture, Chief Scientist for Vinitaly International Academy, and author of various books about wine, including *La stirpe del vino* (2018)

The Native Grape Odyssey project will make native grapes central to its **training courses**. They will be aimed at wine **professionals and enthusiasts**. The program will target the spokespeople of European wines, creating a deeper awareness of them and detailing their distinctive features such as their grape varieties and evolution over time. It will be through training that the program will **promote the image of Europe**, its ancient winemaking traditions, paying particular attention to **designations of origin**. The ambition of the program is to increase competitiveness of these products and draw greater attention to them, and as a side benefit, it may also result in an incentive for **wine tourism**.

If the Odyssey can be classified as the classic of all-time literature, then quality is the classic characteristic of Europe. The NGO program intends on taking advantage of this reputation by creating **spokespeople of European products**. As NGO participants disperse and return to their home countries, they will be encouraged to spread the good word and knowledge of quality European wines.

The first NGO activities have already been planned during Vinitaly 2019 and additional information can be found the project's website: [www.nativegrapeodyssey.eu](http://www.nativegrapeodyssey.eu).

About: Native Grape Odyssey is a project financed by the European Union and managed by Unione Italiana Vini and Zante Agricultural Cooperatives Union for the promotion of PDO and PGI European wines abroad, in particular in three countries: Japan, Canada and Russia. In order to achieve this, the Native Grape Odyssey educational program will organize wine seminars, workshops and b2b meetings both in these countries and in Verona, Italy, inviting wine experts and influencers from these countries. These events, realized in the span of three years (2019-21) aim at creating awareness about European native wines abroad, in particular Italian and Greek wines, which share a long tradition and a high standard of quality.