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Traditional Home Slaughtering of Animals in the Framework of EU Legislation. Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina

Abstract. Traditional home slaughtering of animals is a widespread social practice in the Western Balkans, bringing together families, neighbours, and friends, and contributing to the rise of social capital. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multicultural country where traditional home slaughtering of animals is mostly practised as seasonal slaughtering by Christian communities and as religious slaughtering by Muslim communities. In the framework of existing EU legislation, meat that comes from home slaughtering can be used for private consumption only. However, these rules are not fully aligned with the practices existing on the ground. This article argues that the Western Balkans’ integration into the EU can affect the sustainability of these practices, and it is therefore necessary to amend the relevant legislation and policies to ensure the implementation of EU regulations while respecting the traditional way of communal meat sharing.

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Introduction

Traditional slaughter of animals in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is identified with different practices and customs. The most frequent are the seasonal slaughter of pigs (svinjokolj) among the Christian populations, Muslim religious slaughter of sheep or cows (Qurban/Festival of Sacrifice), and the slaughtering mainly of lambs during civic holidays, such as 1 May, the International Labour Day, which are celebrated across a wide spectrum of society and across all ethnic and religious groups. In addition to the slaughtering of animals, the practice of traditional production of smoked meat products (prosciutto ham, sausages), as well as other animal products (milk, cheese), is widespread.

Traditional slaughter of animals is a good example of an informal practice that is on the one hand subject to new EU rules, and on the other linked to local traditions and values. Observed from the perspective of institutions, the