

OPINION

By: Assoc. Prof. Andrey Ivanov Nonchev, PhD

Regarding: Dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in the scientific specialty Economics and economic policy in the field of study 3.8 “Economics”

Grounds for presenting the review: Participation in the scientific jury for the defence of the dissertation according to Order № ПД 38-282/03.06.2024 of the Rector of SU “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Author: Lilyana Veselinova Georgieva

Topic of the dissertation: Grey Economy in Bulgaria in Comparative Perspective

1. Brief information about the candidate

In 2017 Liliana Georgieva graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics from SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", and in 2019 obtained a master's degree in accounting and auditing (ACCA Platinum) at the same university. In the period 2020 - 2024, Liliana Georgieva was educated in a full-time doctoral program “Economics and economic policy” at the Faculty of Economics at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

The total volume of the dissertation is 300 pages. Its content mainly consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion (169 p.), four appendices (100 p.) and references (21 p.). The list of references includes 269 sources (244 in English, 19 in Bulgarian and 6 in Russian language). The dissertation also presents a list of graphs and figures, a list of tables, notes, author’s reference with basic scientific contributions, publications of the author on the subject of the dissertation, participation in scientific forums where parts of the dissertation were presented, acknowledgments.

The doctoral thesis is well structured and has a clear logic. The actuality and significance of the dissertation research, its object and subject, as well as its limitations, are convincingly presented with well-founded arguments. The research thesis, the goal and the tasks of the dissertation research are well formulated and justified. The set goal was fully realized, while

at the same time new data were obtained about the object and subject of the dissertation and reasoned conclusions were made. The methodology of the research fully corresponds to the subject of the dissertation and the set research goal. The theoretical framework and methodological tools are adapted to the specifics of the research topic and are distinguished by an original author's style. The doctoral student's views are arguably defended. The style of presentation follows the good models and standards of scientific discourse. The language used is readable and understandable.

3. Evaluation of the obtained scientific and scientific-applied results

I will highlight only the most important achievements of the author, which give convincing reasons for a high assessment of her work:

First, the dissertation research has an original character, with the author demonstrating an extensive knowledge on the topic of the grey economy. An original author's methodology and research tools have been developed, which are relevant to the subject of the dissertation and are in direct logical connection with the performed analysis.

Second, a critical review of scientific achievements in the field of the shadow economy has been carried out. The development of scientific research on the topic and the evolution of theoretical views on key issues, as well as current discussions related to the subject of the dissertation, have been examined.

Third, through the use of statistical data, the main structural and qualitative characteristics of the grey economy in Bulgaria have been outlined and a comparative analysis has been made with the features of the grey economy in the European Union, the Eurozone, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, Croatia and the Czech Republic.

Fourth, the values of the constructed composite index of tax morale for the various economic agents have been analysed and statistically significant differences in the individual tax morale of various socio-demographic and socioeconomic groups of economic agents have been traced.

Fifth, a comparative analysis has been carried out on the data obtained from the conducted statistical tests for Bulgaria and for the EU, the Eurozone, as well as for the five selected countries (Greece, Romania, Slovakia, Croatia and the Czech Republic).

4. Evaluation of the doctoral thesis scientific contributions

I generally accept the formulations of the author's contributions indicated on page 175-177 of the dissertation, which adequately present research achievements of Lilyana Georgieva. Several significant scientific and scientific-applied contributions can be identified in the doctoral thesis, that I would summarize in several areas, which correspond to the author's self-assessment:

First, the dissertation enriches the available knowledge and methodological approaches for researching the grey economy in a comparative plan. An original author's methodology and toolset for the analysis of the grey economy have been proposed, which can be used as a model for future scientific studies on the subject.

Second, new facts have been registered and significant problems related to the causes, spread and scale of the shadow economy in Bulgaria have been identified. The current characteristics of the grey economy in Bulgaria have been outlined and a comparison has been made with the European Union, the Eurozone and the selected reference countries Greece, Romania, Slovakia, Croatia and the Czech Republic.

Thirdly, the grey economy has been analysed both from the demand side (most frequently purchased services, motivation of buyers) and from the supply side (most affected sectors, most performed undeclared activities, motivation of participants), which allows the formulation of effective policies to reduce it.

Fourth, a significant contribution of the dissertation is the constructed composite index of tax morale for all countries considered. Through the use of regression analysis tools, the hypothesis of the existence of a statistically significant relationship between tax behaviour and tax morale have been verified. In this context, tax morale is interpreted as an important factor in tax collection.

Fifth, the dissertation contributes to scientific knowledge by outlining current similarities and differences in the tax morale of various socio-demographic and socio-economic groups of the population. Statistically significant differences and similarities have been found in the average values of tax morale index of different population groups in Bulgaria and other EU states.

5. Evaluation of publications on the topic of the dissertation

The dissertation presents a list of author's publications that are related to its topic. A developed chapter in a collective monograph (The institutional conditions for membership in the Eurozone and why the path is more important than its goal. In: Petranov, St., Georgieva, L. and R. Ivcheva. (2022). "Challenges to the Bulgarian economy on the road to membership in the Eurozone", University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski") and eight publications in scientific journals and conference proceedings have been indicated. Parts of the dissertation have also been presented at eight national and international scientific forums.

The author's publications are sufficient in number according to the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, meet professional quality standards and have received recognition in a critical academic environment.

6. Evaluation of the abstract

The abstract (50 pages) correctly and fully reflects the content of the dissertation. It also contains a self-assessment for the doctoral thesis contributions of a theoretical and scientific-applied nature, as well as a list of the author's publications.

7. Critical remarks, recommendations and questions

I highly appreciate the work done by the author on her dissertation research, carried out on a well-founded theoretical framework, original research tools, and supported by in-depth analysis of the collected information.

I recommend the doctoral student to increase the international visibility of her research activity by publishing more actively in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information.

8. Conclusion

The dissertation is developed in accordance with the normative requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", reflected in the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, adopted by the Council of Ministers and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Based on the merits of the dissertation and creative achievements of the author, taking into account her extensive knowledge of the topic, demonstrated capacity and skills for independent research and analysis, as well as her contributions to the assessment of grey economy in Bulgaria in comparative perspective, I express my conviction that Lilyana Georgieva meets all legal and professional requirements for being awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

1.08.2024

Signature:

Sofia

(Assoc. Prof. Andrey Nonchev)