



## POSITION

From: *prof. Dr. Nikolay Hristov Sterev, UNWE-Sofia*

Scientific specialty: 05.02.18 Economics and Management; 3.8. Organization and management of production

Concerning: dissertation for the presence in the educational and scientific degree "*Doctor*" in the scientific specialty *Economics and management (agriculture)*

Author of the dissertation: *IVANKA STOYCHEVA ZHEKOVA*

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TRAKIA UNIVERSITY - Stara Zagora

Topic of the dissertation: *ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT OF THE REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE*

Grounds for presentation of the opinion: participation in the composition of the Scientific Jury according to Order of the Rector of TRAKIA UNIVERSITY - Stara Zagora.

### **1. Relevance of the problem**

Undoubtedly, the topic of the dissertation can be defined as especially relevant in modern business conditions - the opportunities for growth of the regional and national economy as a result of concentration and specialization of regions. Addressing these issues is becoming increasingly necessary, especially in the regional specialization of countries within the EU.

Although regional development is the result of years of tradition in the economic, social and political conditions, understanding regional differences and opportunities for growth by promoting some industries at the expense of others is an important tool for the growth of any economic system, incl. and for Bulgaria. Moreover, this understanding of evidence-based support may explain the economic backwardness of Eastern European countries compared to Central and Western Europe, as well as the serious economic backwardness of the Northwestern and North-Central municipalities in Bulgaria compared to the South-Central, South-Eastern municipalities and the capital. On this basis, the presented dissertation work, as well as the methodological tools used by doctoral student *IVANKA STOYCHEVA ZHEKOVA*, are necessary and important for the assessment of the potential of the production specializations by EU countries and municipalities in Bulgaria. Moreover, the preliminary assessment is that in the dissertation and the presented abstract to it the doctoral thesis has presented and argued with appropriate authors those justifying to assess the role of the regional industry structure for the formation of high economic growth in Bulgaria.



## **2. General characteristics of scientific research**

The dissertation on "*ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT OF THE REGIONAL INDUSTRY STRUCTURE*", presented by *IVANKA STOYCHEVA ZHEKOVA*, has a total volume of 235 pages and is structured in Introduction, 3 chapters, and conclusion. In the dissertation 35 tables and 16 figures are presented and 10 appendices are taken out of the main body. The bibliographic reference includes 219 literary sources, of which 37 in Bulgarian and 182 in foreign languages.

In terms of structure and content, the dissertation presented by *IVANKA STOYCHEVA ZHEKOVA* is balanced by presenting: first, the main theoretical foundations of the assessment of regional and sectoral structures and their impact on economic growth (first chapter of DT); second, methodological and applied tools for assessment and analysis of specialization by regions and specializations within the EU (second chapter); third, assessment of the factors and constraints determining the regional and sectoral specialization in Bulgaria (third chapter of the DT).

The structural integrity and the logical connection of the individual structural elements of the dissertation are well presented and protected by a clear and understandable conceptual framework. In addition, the overall concept on which the dissertation research is based can be highly appreciated.

The reasons for the high grade are:

- The object and the subject are correctly defined;
- The main goal and tasks are precise, clear and logically related to the leading research thesis;
- The thesis of DT defined by the doctoral student is accurate and can be checked through the selected methodological tools.

## **3. Evaluation of scientific and scientific-applied contributions**

The content of the dissertation allows to highly appreciate the competence of the doctoral student in terms of theory, methodology and applied aspects of the chosen topic.

The presented for peer-reviewed materials: dissertation work, abstract and publications on DT fully confirm the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained in the dissertation work.

I support the contributions presented in the abstract:

- Scientific contributions
  - Scientific systematization and critical review of theoretical background on the structural approach in historical terms and in the context of a knowledge-based economy in the face of modern challenges;
  - Based on a literature study, an author's approach has been developed and adapted to the needs of a targeted national and regional policy for grouping regions according to criteria for assessing regional structural differences.
- Applied contributions



- An applied model has been tested, including a set of statistical and economic methods, through which key factor influences are determined, determining the regional socio-economic differences;
- Based on the applied analysis, significant patterns and trends related to the level, dynamics and structure of regional and sectoral differences are identified, which can be used for targeted structuring and regulation of the economy in order to achieve sustainable economic growth;
- Based on the summaries and conclusions, recommendations are made for creating more favorable conditions for the formation of a sectoral economic structure at national and regional level, which will give impetus to economic development based on smart and sustainable growth.

Moreover, these contributions are of great importance for theory and practice and they could belong to the following two groups:

- enrichment, specification and refinement of existing scientific and applied knowledge on the subject of the dissertation research;
- application of existing methods for solving a specific problem for a specific site with formulated conclusions and recommendations for practice.

#### 4. Critical remarks, recommendations and questions

My general positive opinion is related to the established high assessment of the achievements in the dissertation, as well as to the fact that the dissertation does not reveal significant omissions and inaccuracies.

One question can be asked:

- According to the results obtained from the regional and sectoral specialization in Bulgaria, how would you assess the regional priorities of the Innovative Strategy for Smart Specialization (ISSS) in Bulgaria?

#### 5. Conclusion

The dissertation proposed by *IVANKA STOYCHEVA ZHEKOVA* on "*ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT OF THE REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE*" fully meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. My general assessment is that the dissertation is an independently completed author's research, in which the research tasks are successfully completed and the main goal is achieved. It allows me to give a high generalized assessment of the dissertation.

Given the above characteristics of the dissertation thesis, as well as the author's contributions in it, I strongly recommend the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to award *IVANKA STOYCHEVA ZHEKOVA* educational and scientific degree "**DOCTOR**" in *Economics and management (agriculture)*.

**Заличено!**

15 November 2021  
Sofia

Member of the scientific jury: .....  
/prof. Dr. Nikolay Sterev/