



**TRAKIA UNIVERSITY - STARA ZAGORA,  
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS**

## EVALUATION REPORT

**From:** Prof. Dr. Veneta Stoyanova Gaydardzhieva; Trakia University - Stara Zagora, Department of Regional Development, scientific specialty: "National Economy (history of the national economy - regional development)".

**Subject:** dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty: "National Economy (incl. Regional economy and history of the national economy)" at the Trakia University.

*Author of dissertation:* Petya Dobrinova Atanasova

*Dissertation topic:* "Intelligent specialization of the regional economy (the example of Yambol district)"

**Grounds for presenting the opinion:** participation in the composition of the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation, according to Order № 1223 / 20.05.2021 of the Rector of the Trakia University, Stara Zagora.

### 1. Information about the dissertation

Petya Atanasova studied for a doctoral program at the Department of Regional Development, Faculty of Economics, Trakia University, scientific specialty: "National Economy (including regional economy and history of the national economy)", according to Order of the Rector of TrU № 479 / 01.03 .2018 The training was carried out in absentia, with a term of four years, during the period 01.03.2018 - 01.03.2022. Supervisor is Prof. Dr. Juliana Ivanova Blagoeva-Yarkova. The doctoral student was finished with the right to defend her dissertation by Order of the Rector of TrU № 948 / 29.04.2021.

### 2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

The research interest is focused on the intelligent specialization of regional farms. For the development of the regions in Bulgaria, at the stage of a new programming period, it is important to update the national strategic documents, respectively - "Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization of Republic of Bulgaria 2014 - 2020" and in this regard - to study the state and the profile of regional farms. The dissertation pays special attention to the regions of level 3 - the areas that are administrative-territorial units and can develop their own strategies, monitor their implementation and timely update the set priorities, goals and measures.

The analysis of the economic structure at the regional level made in the dissertation takes into account the dominant role of low value added sectors. One of the ways to increase the regional product and regional competitiveness is the development of higher-tech production. Identifying the unique characteristics and opportunities of the region to develop in "smart" areas is the basis for building competitive advantages. To this end, the doctoral student emphasizes the need to build an up-to-date vision for the development of Yambol district, to meet the challenges and adapt to modern conditions, to achieve sustainable economic growth, effective use of the specific economic and human potential of the district.

The developed dissertation work has a scientific and scientific-applied character. The structure is properly constructed and contributes to the objective study of the chosen topic. A good balance has been achieved between the different parts of the study. The dissertation, in terms of volume and structure, meets the formal requirements for the award of ONS "Doctor". It contains 190 pages of main text, including 45 figures, 27 tables and 14 appendices, formed in: introduction, 3 chapters, conclusion, appendices, list of figures, list of tables, list of appendices, list of references from 179 sources, from which books and other publications - 137 pcs. (32 in Bulgarian and 105 in English), normative documents - 29, Internet addresses - 13.

The presented research has its merits in the specific issues, from which the following can be distinguished:

- the ambition, the work to contribute to the challenges of filling the information deficit and accumulating expertise in this topical and important for regional development topic;
- clearly formulated goal, research tasks, subject of analysis and main thesis;
- logically correctly constructed structure, according to the set topic. Achieved good balance between the different parts of the study;
- in the course of the analysis a number of sources were studied: articles by Bulgarian and foreign authors in specialized publications, statistical sources, normative documents, etc. The bibliography has a high information value.

The systematization of the results of the research work and the conclusions made at the end of each chapter makes a good impression.

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

In terms of content and style, Petya Atanasova presented a well-formed work in which the basic requirements are met. As a result of the literature review of the concept and definitions at European and national level, the author found that there is no definite definition of "smart specialization". This gives it reason to assume that these features can be reviewed, updated and updated. The author's understanding of smart specialization is presented as: "knowledge- and innovation-based transformation of the regional economy, which builds on local potential and strengths of the region to improve the well-being of the local community and competitiveness of the region", which is a contribution to the dissertation .

### **4. Evaluation of the dissertation publications**

The doctoral student has presented three publications on the dissertation. The results of the research have already been tested by Petya Atanasova through reports from conferences and publications in journals. These are three publications in English, one of which is a freelance author. In terms of content, they reflect the topic of the research and quantitatively meet the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

### **5. Evaluation of the abstract**

The abstract is 35 pages long and meets the requirements for compliance with the dissertation, giving a sufficiently complete and accurate idea of the study. The reference to the contributions really reflects the results of the dissertation.

### **6. Critical remarks, recommendations and questions**

The issues addressed by the author are relevant and important for the socio-economic development of the regions. I support the doctoral student's idea that the formulated broad thematic areas of smart specialization do not create preconditions for prosperity of the less developed regions in the country, specializing in traditional industries, and therefore the fear that this approach will become a factor that will not help reduce of interregional differences.

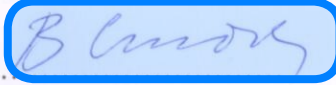
My recommendation is to deepen the research in this direction and to promote and defend them before the competent authorities.

### 7. 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 application and the Regulations for organizing and conducting competitions for scientific degrees and for holding academic positions at the Trakia University.

Based on the above positive aspects and contributions, I highly appreciate the developed dissertation and with full conviction I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to decide on awarding the ONS "Doctor" to Petya Dobrinova Atanasova in the field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics; scientific specialty "National Economy (incl. regional economy and history of the national economy)".

July 27, 2021  
Stara Zagora

Signature: ...   
(Prof. Dr. Veneta Gaydardzhieva)