

## **REVIEW**

**From Prof. Dr. Silvia Trifonova Trifonova-Pramatarova,  
University of National and World Economy (UNWE), Sofia**

of a dissertation for the award of the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences”

in Area of Study 3. Social Sciences, Economics and Law

Field of Study 3.8. Economics

**Author: Dr. Alina Walenia**

**Title: “Competitiveness of the member states of the European Union in the light of the implementation of the “Europe 2020” Strategy”**

### **1. General description of the presented materials**

By order No. 106 of 01.03.2023 of the Rector of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance (VUZF) Prof. DSc. of Law Boris Velchev, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic “Competitiveness of the member states of the European Union in the light of the implementation of the “Europe 2020” Strategy” for the award of a scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in the Area of Study 3. Social Sciences, Economics and Law, Field of Study 3.8. Economics. The author of the dissertation is Dr. Alina Walenia – a candidate for the “Finance” Department of the VUZF.

The materials presented by the VUZF include all the necessary documents for the procedure, namely: CV in English, copy of the diploma for the acquired educational-qualification degree "Doctor", dissertation in Russian, abstract in Russian, abstract in Bulgarian, a list of publications and summaries, a certificate of fulfillment of the national minimum requirements for acquiring a scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in a professional direction 3.8. Economics, scientific jury order, presentation by Dr. Alina Walenia, reference of contributions in Russian.

According to the abstract, the candidate has submitted a total of 19 publications, while according to the list of publications and abstracts, the candidate has submitted a total of 20 publications. In the Reference for the fulfillment of the national minimum requirements for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", 1 habilitation thesis - monograph, 1 monograph that is not presented as the main habilitation thesis, 1 article published in a scientific publication, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific

information, 101 articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes, 8 published chapters of collective monographs. After checking on my part, I found that the scientific publication referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases is referenced and indexed in Clarivate Web of Science.

## **2. Brief biographical data about the candidate**

Alina Walenia has the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in Agricultural sciences from the University of Agriculture in Lublin in 1998 and in Economics in 2008 from the Warsaw School of Economics, College of Management and Science, Poland. The topic of her dissertation on Economics is “Financing of regional development under the conditions of membership in the European Union, based on the example of the Podkarpackie region”.

Alina Walenia graduated with a master’s degree in Economics from the Department of Economics of Agricultural Trade in Rzeszów, University of Agriculture in Krakow in 1985, after which she has many other postgraduate studies and qualifications in the field of European integration, economic policy in the EU, audit and control of funds in the public sector, etc.

Since August 1, 1986, Alina Walenia has worked in the Supreme Audit Service – Rzeszów branch as a chief specialist in state control, and since February 8, 2004 – as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economic Policy, College of Social Sciences, University of Rzeszów, Poland. She is the author of numerous publications in the field of regional development, the management of European financial resources, the activities of public institutions in connection with the management of EU funds, the control and audit procedures of European funds, etc. She has presented results of her research at numerous scientific conferences. He is the contractor of 4 research projects.

## **3. Relevance of the topic and appropriateness of the set goals and tasks**

The topic of the problem developed in the dissertation work of Dr. Alina Walenia is relevant and interesting from a scientific and applied point of view. The candidate examines the competitiveness of the economies of the EU member states and the position of the EU on the international scene in the context of the implementation of the goals of the “Europe 2020” Strategy. An important research problem is the answer to the question of whether and to what extent the provisions of the “Europe 2020” Strategy have been implemented and what impact they have on increasing the competitiveness of the economies of individual EU member states and the entire EU on the international stage.

## **4. Knowing the problem**

The author is very well acquainted with the issues of scientific research, taking into account her rich research and practical experience in the field of regional development, the management of European funds, the activity of public institutions in connection with the management of EU funds, and the control and the audit procedures of European funds.

The dissertation presents a method for assessing the international competitiveness of EU member states and the entire EU on the international scene, developed on the basis of Helwig's multidimensional comparative analysis<sup>1</sup>. The Helwig method was one of the first methods for identifying and evaluating diagnostic variables. The diagnostic variables include stimulators (X1, X2, X5, X9, X10) and disstimulators (X4, X6, X7, X8), which are the main indicators proposed by Eurostat for monitoring the „Europe 2020” Strategy. Other analytical methods were also used to assess the competitiveness of the countries in the dissertation work.

The study of issues related to the methods for assessing the competitiveness of the EU member states is particularly important and topical, especially with the implementation of the goals of the „Europe 2020” Strategy. In this study, an analysis of the economic effects, expressed including through economic and social indicators, is made to determine and evaluate the international competitiveness of the EU member states and the entire EU on the international stage.

## **5. Research methodology**

The chosen research methodology in the dissertation work of Dr. Alina Walenia is diverse and includes the following scientific methods: method of induction and deduction, method of analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis, empirical analysis, descriptive analysis, factor analysis, index analysis, statistical analysis, incl. Helwig's method, correlation analysis, regression analysis, multivariate comparative analysis, critical analysis, etc. The Helwig method was applied to assess the degree of implementation of the indicators that determine the degree of implementation of the “Europe 2020” Strategy in the EU countries during the period 2010-2020.

## **6. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work**

The dissertation work of Dr. Alina Walenia has a total volume of 284 pages. It is structured in an introduction, five main sections, subsections, conclusion, bibliography, list of tables and list of figures. 39 tables and 55 figures are presented. The list of information sources includes 177 literary sources that are not numbered.

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<sup>1</sup> Hellwig, Z. (1968). “Usage of taxonomic methods for the typological divisions countries”, Stat Overview, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 307-327.

The object of the research of the dissertation is the assessment of the position of the EU member states in 2010 at the stage of launching the implementation of the „Europe 2020” Strategy and towards 2020. The empirical model used in the study covers 27 member states of EU, based on the data published by Eurostat and other international financial institutions – the International Institute for Management and Development, the World Economic Forum, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank. The time range of the study covers 2010-2020, i.e. the implementation period of the „Europe 2020” Strategy.

The subject of the Helwig method study is the assessment of the economic and social progress achieved by the implementation of the “Europe 2020” plan, i.e. in 2010 and 2020, as well as checking whether and to what extent individual EU member states have achieved the planned values of indicators for the level of employment, for investments in research and development activity from GDP, for climate and energy (including reducing carbon emissions), to reduce the number of early school leavers and to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty.

The main goal of the study is to present methods and indicators for assessing the competitiveness of the EU member states in relation to the implementation of the goals of the “Europe 2020” Strategy, and to assess the position of the EU member states in 2010 and 2020. The aim of the study by the Helwig model is to assess the economic and social progress achieved during this 10-year period of the “Europe 2020” plan. The author formulated 10 specific research tasks and four research hypotheses, which were verified in the course of the analysis.

## **7. Contributions and significance of the development for science and practice**

The assessment of the degree of implementation of the provisions of the “Europe 2020” Strategy in the EU countries was made through a comparative analysis of the indicators and covers the period 2010-2020 through a multidimensional comparative analysis. The development model of Z. Helwig in its classic version was used for the analysis. The synthetic indicator for the implementation of the “Europe 2020” Strategy is determined on the basis of detailed factors (published by the European Commission) for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy. Based on a synthetic indicator calculated for 2010 and 2020, a ranking of EU countries was created, taking into account the degree of implementation of the provisions of the “Europe 2020” Strategy. On the basis of the calculated synthetic indicators according to Helwig’s method, a rating was created of the countries that in 2020, i.e. as a result of the implementation of the Strategy, have achieved the best, average and worst position according to the long-term indicators of the EU development program.

The results of the research, conducted on the basis of the analysis of the state of the indicators adopted in the “Strategy 2020” for 2010, testify to the unfavorable economic and social situation of a significant group

of EU countries defined as economically weak, with a low GDP of head of population. The economically weakest countries and at the same time with the lowest achieved performance in the implementation of the Strategy have been identified in 2010 and 2020, and this group includes the Baltic States and the Central and Eastern European states. The dissertation makes an important assessment of the economic and social progress achieved during the 10-year period of implementation of the “Europe 2020” plan.

The contribution list, which is in Russian, lists the contributions of Dr. Alina Walenia’s dissertation. After my translation of this reference from Russian into Bulgarian, I found that the reference mainly states the results of the scientific research of a theoretical and a practical-applied nature.

In my opinion, the following **five contributions to science and practice of the candidate’s dissertation can be highlighted:**

(1) Detailing the theoretical-methodological concepts of competitiveness, common competition policy and cohesion policy of the EU, with its financial instruments for the programming period 2014-2020 and for the programming period after 2020, which are decisive for the “Europe 2020” Strategy.

(2) Study the impact of the “Europe 2020” Strategy on the functioning of EU cohesion policy in relation to the multiannual financial program 2014-2020 as well as in the current financial perspective 2021-2027 and carry out a comparative assessment of the degree of implementation of the adopted indicators in the strategy in individual member states and in the entire EU.

(3) An assessment was made of the extent to which the funds from the EU budget intended for cohesion policies are used to support the achievement of the objectives of the “Europe 2020” Strategy.

(4) Determining the competitive position of the EU member states in relation to other countries in the world based on regional competitiveness indices published by the European Commission and other ratings developed by international financial institutions, and the competitive position of the EU in general on the international scene in connection with the implementation of the strategy for 2010-2020.

(5) A synthetic indicator was developed, determining the degree of implementation of the “Europe 2020” Strategy using statistical methods, and ranking the EU member states in four groups, taking into account changes in their development in 2010-2020 (group 1 - high: stable Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, group 2 - medium high: stable Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Ireland, Austria, group 3 - medium low: stable Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, France, Portugal, group 4 - low: stable Cyprus, Spain, Italy).

The results of the research, presented in the dissertation work of Dr. Alina Walenia, are very important for the planning of the socio-economic development of the individual EU member states, as well as of the entire EU on the international stage.

### **8. Assessment of dissertation publications**

In the abstract, the candidate has attached a total of 19 publications, and in the list of publications and abstracts - a total of 20 publications. The publications are closely related to the topic of her dissertation. All of the candidate's publications listed in the list of publications are her own.

In the Reference for the fulfillment of the national minimum requirements for obtaining the academic degree "Doctor of Sciences", 1 habilitation thesis - monograph, 1 monograph that is not presented as the main habilitation thesis, 1 article published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information, 101 articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes, 8 published chapters of collective monographs.

### **9. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements**

From the presented Reference for the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in the professional direction 3.8. Economics, which the candidate of Dr. Alina Walenia has applied, it is evident that there is an over-fulfilment of these requirements.

### **10. Personal involvement of the candidate**

I believe that the dissertation work is the work of the candidate herself, the result of his research on issues that are closely related to her scientific and professional interests.

### **11. Abstract**

The content and quality of the abstract reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation work of the candidate.

### **12. Critical remarks and recommendations**

In essence, I have no critical remarks and recommendations for the presented dissertation work of Dr. Alina Walenia. But I have a question for the candidate in relation to her conclusion that the competitive position of most EU countries in terms of the implementation of the strategic objectives of the cohesion policy set out in the "Europe 2020" Strategy has not improved significantly. The author found that thanks to the implementation of the strategy in 2020 compared to 2010, 15 EU countries improved their competitive positions, and 12 EU countries, including Bulgaria, worsened their competitive positions.

In this regard, my question is: What are the main reasons for the deterioration of Bulgaria's competitive position (from 18th to 21st place) and how should this process be reversed?

### **13. Personal impressions**

I do not know the candidate and I have no personal impressions of her.

### **CONCLUSION**

Alina Walenia's dissertation work is very thorough and contains important scientific and scientific-applied contributions and **meets** the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB. Due to the above, I give my *positive assessment* of the research conducted, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and *I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the scientific degree „Doctor of Sciences“* to Alina Walenia in the Area of Study 3. Social Sciences, Economics and Law, Field of Study 3.8. Economics.

11.04.2023

Reviewer:

(Prof. Dr. Silvia Trifonova-Pramatarova)