

R E V I E W

by

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regarding dissertation for obtaining scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences”

in field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal sciences

Professional field: 3.8. Economy

Author: Alina Valenia

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

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY,

Grounds for providing this review is Order No. 106 of March 1st, 2023 of the Rector of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance (VUZF) for the conduction of procedure for the defense of a dissertation thesis for obtaining a scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal sciences, Professional field 3.8. Economy.

The procedure is conducted in accordance to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its implementation, as well as in accordance to the requirements of the internal rules of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance.

Within the framework of the procedure, to the dissertation paper on the topic of "Competitiveness of the European Union Member States in the light of implementation of "Europe 2020" Strategy", the author Alina Valenia, PhD presents documents including CV, an abstract of the dissertation thesis, a list and summary of scientific publications, scientific articles, author's reference for the contributions of the dissertation thesis, reference for implementation of the minimum national requirements for acquiring the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences”.

- ***BRIEF BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND DATA OF THE CANDIDATE***

The dissertation submitted for review has been developed by Alina Valenia, PhD. Based on the biographical data submitted within the procedure it is presented that the candidate holds a Master's degree in Economics of production and trade in agricultural products. She holds a scientific degree of "PhD" in two scientific fields. In 1998 obtains a PhD in agricultural sciences, and in 2008 by successfully defending a dissertation thesis on the topic of "Financing regional development under the conditions of membership in the European Union on the example of the Subcarpathian region" obtains a PhD in Economy.

The candidate has submitted and published multiple scientific publications both in Polish and in English language in regards to defending the dissertation thesis and in aim to ensure publicity of the results and the contributions obtained within the framework of development of this dissertation.

It is observed that a significant part of the presented scientific publications is related to the dissertation and being personally set and published by the author and others are published in co-authorship.

The articles cover topics scoping at risk management in local finance sector, as well as study on types of influence on the quality of public administration related to the establishment of regional development policy with the use of European Union funds

Alina Valenia, PhD developed and published a monographic book on "Mechanisms for control of legal and financial instruments of the EU cohesion policy regarding the financial perspective 2014-2020." (In polish: Mechanizmy kontroli instrumentów prawno – finansowych polityki spójności UE w perspektywie finansowej 2014 – 2020. Wydawnictwo Difin, Warszawa, ISBN: 978-83-8085-570-0). Within the framework of research on the topic, an analysis of generally applicable regulations related to the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund has been conducted and presented.

The candidate in her current research, examines in depth and presents the essence, functions and importance of sources of finance for sustainable agriculture and rural areas in the EU within the time framework 2021-2027.

In the dissertation submitted for review, the author examines the topic of Competitiveness of the European Union Member States in the light of implementation of "Europe 2020" Strategy, with special attention to the topic of intelligent specializations in the

process of sustainable development of the regions. It has been related to the fact that specialization as a method of production allows business, region or economy to focus on the production of limited range of products or services in order to obtain higher product efficiency.

The dissertation has been developed in accordance to the legally established requirements.

- ***RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC AND ADVANCE OF THE GOALS AND TASKS SET***

According to the framework for determining national priorities for reforms and monitoring the implementation of operational and framework programs, at European Union level activities should be implemented in accordance to economic policies, including the principles of the Pillar of European Social Rights. EU Member States should develop their own national multi-annual investment strategies to support such reforms.

In this regard, EU Member States should take into consideration the relevant specific national recommendations established. During the program period covering the time range from 2021 to 2027 EU Member States should regularly submit to the Monitoring Committee and to the European Commission program for progress in implementation in addition to the specific country recommendations.

EU Member States need to establish a performance quality framework for each program covering all indicators, targets and goals. By the quality framework, it will be possible to track, report and evaluate the quality of the implementation of a relevant program. This would enable monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the quality of program implemented and would contribute to measuring the overall results of the funding programmes.

The goal set in the framework of the dissertation has been related to the presentation of theoretical aspects of competitiveness of the economy, as according to economic theories this process is determined by factors measuring and shaping international competitiveness.

Based on data from Eurostat and on other international sources, an assessment has been provided for the time framework 2010-2020 on the extent where the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy are being met and its impact on the competitive positions of the EU Member States, as well as of the European Union are presented in international context.

It is important to note the fact that objectives of the funds should be pursued with an aim to providing adequate support in particular to local and regional authorities. Aiming to overcome socio-economic challenges related to the integration of citizens, as well as the provision of adequate support for disadvantaged regions and communities.

- ***CHARACTERISTICS AND EVALUATION OF THE DISSERTATION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY***

The dissertation contents of 284 pages, structurally includes an introductory part, 5 (five) chapters, conclusions, contributions and bibliographic reference sources.

The dissertation paper is highly illustrated presenting 39 tables and 56 images.

The bibliography consists of total of 177 sources, including monographic books, scientific articles and legislative acts. Wide range of titles and sources is included.

Within the reference sources of the dissertation, national and international normative legal acts are included. Additionally scientific and literature sources could be outlined.

Based on the analysis of the sources on the topic in accordance to the formulated goals and tasks of the scientific research, the author of the dissertation has formulated the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: In relation to the implementation of the "Europe 2020" Strategy in the EU countries, a noticeable improvement is observed in the indicators characterizing its individual areas (intellectual development, sustainable growth, social integration). The competitive position of economically stronger countries has improved significantly, but there is still a development gap between economically strong and weak EU countries.

Hypothesis 2: The competitive position of the economically weakest EU Member States, as measured by the ratio of GDP per capita to the EU average rate, has not improved significantly due to the implementation of the strategic objectives of the cohesion policy included in Europe 2020 Strategy.

Hypothesis 3: The context of Europe 2020 Strategy wide socio-economic aspect could not be achieved in the most economically weak countries.

Hypothesis 4: EU financial instruments had a significant impact on the implementation of the accepted assumptions of the Europe 2020 Strategy in the area of three priorities: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The methods used within the dissertation work have been precisely selected and properly used. Research methods supplements one another, allowing the information to be evaluated in various ways.

Within the framework of the dissertation, a study has been carried out and an analysis has been developed, the results of the study confirm that an increase in government debt contributes to a slowdown in economic growth, while low level of government debt has a positive effect on economic growth. A thesis has been formulated supporting that high level of debt has a negative effect on the economic growth of a country.

Specific norms of national legislation are being used, based on which measurement methods and indicators for reporting on international competitiveness are being formulated and implemented. Analyses has also been provided and presented.

The research methods provided within the in dissertation includes analysis and synthesis, analogy, systematic methods of research, as well as dialectical methods.

- ***EVALUATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ABSTRACT TO THE DISSERTATION***

A 26-page abstract has been submitted and presented along to the dissertation. It includes general characteristics of the dissertation, structure and content reference to the dissertation. The brief abstract presents the main focus of the dissertation including emphasis in the results and conclusions obtained.

My overall assessment to the abstract of the dissertation shows that it contains the ground aspects of the paper and presents the main findings and key points of the dissertation with the necessary clarity.

- ***CONTRIBUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISSERTATION ON SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL GROUNDS***

The current dissertation paper on the topic of "Competitiveness of the European Union Member States in the light of implementation of "Europe 2020" Strategy" could be characterized as a comprehensive scientific study dedicated to significant aspects of social and economic issues related to competitiveness.

A significant emphasis is put on the concept and approach of Smart Specialization as means of improving the competitiveness of the European economy based on strong competitive advantages and investing primarily in sectors where significant success has been achieved.

The dissertation takes into consideration the fact that Smart Specialization requires a high level of connectivity both with transnational and national policies, programs and strategies, in regards to tools and methods. A thesis has been supported on the management of knowledge and the availability of scientific infrastructure being essential for the development of such concept.

Based on the overall assessment and analysis of the dissertation work submitted within the procedure, specific scientific and theoretical contributions have been provided, as well as conclusions of practical importance.

When analyzing the researched topic, the author identifies essential components and key requirements related to the implementation of framework programs at EU level. By the implementation of mechanisms through European Fund (for example the European Fund for Regional Development) it is possible to guarantee that individual investments could be included as part of long-term strategy having a strong innovative component.

The results of the research provided within the framework of the dissertation are of a contributing nature and are of great importance for the planning of socio-economic development of individual EU Member States, as well as for the development of the European Community.

The research presented and the results formulated on the basis of the extensive analysis regarding the development of the coordinated and harmonized implementation of the EU funds are of a contributing essence. Emphasis is put on the principle of shared management related to the implementation of EU funds, as examples of such management could be identified with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Cohesion Fund, etc.

It is essential that the implementation of the funds considers the horizontal principles set in Art. 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and in Art. 10 of the TFEU, including the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality set in Art. 5 of TEU, taking into account the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

- ***ASSESSMENT OF FULFILLMENT THE MINIMUM NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS***

By the documents presented within the procedure, it is evident that the scientific work provided by the candidate on the conduction of the dissertation paper and the scientific production presented are in accordance to the criteria and the minimum national requirements

for obtaining a scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal sciences, Professional field 3.8. Economy.

- **NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

I recommend to the candidate, in regards to the importance and relevance of the research topic on the dissertation, to expand the scope of research by studying, analyzing and presenting mechanisms for optimizing the process of planning and financing activities in the field of EU cohesion policy. Of particular importance is the identification of factors and the implementation of set of measures having a positive impact on increasing competitiveness within the EU. It is in this context that is possible to upgrade, supplement and develop scientific research on the topic of competitiveness of the European Union Member States.

CONCLUSION

In regards to the fulfillment of all legally based requirements on the development and defence of a dissertation for obtaining a scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in accordance to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its implementation. Considering the overall assessment of the achieved contributions in the dissertation presented, **I provide a positive assessment on the dissertation and propose to the honourable members of the scientific jury to vote for the obtaining of a scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" by Alina Valenia, PhD** in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal sciences, Professional field 3. 8. Economics.

7.04.2023

Reviewer:

signature

Prof. Mariela Deliverska, LLM, PhD, DSc.