

## OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentina Grigorova Grigorova-Gencheva,

Department of Finance and Insurance

for a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

in Higher Education Area 3. Social, economic and legal sciences

Professional direction 3.8. Economy

Author: Julinda Shehaj, Albania

Topic: Financial and legal aspects of the fight against organized crime in the world and the Balkan countries Bulgaria, Albania and North Macedonia

### 1. General description of the presented materials

By order No. 258 of 27.06.2023 of the Rector of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance, Prof. Doctor 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 "Financial and legal aspects of the fight against organized crime in the world and the Balkan countries Bulgaria, Albania and North Macedonia" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree " doctor" in the Higher Education Department 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional direction 3.8. Economy. The author of the dissertation is Julinda Shehaj - PhD student at the Department of Finance and Insurance.

The materials submitted by Julinda Shehaj include documents according to the presented inventory: autobiography and dissertation in English, abstract in English and in Bulgarian, a report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for the acquisition of the Doctorate of the National Academy of Sciences in professional field 3.8. Economics, list and summaries of publications, declaration of originality and credibility of the dissertation work.

The PhD student has submitted 3 articles in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals.

## 2. Brief biographical data about the candidate

Yulinda Shehai holds a BA and MA in Law from the University of Tirana, Albania. He also holds a master's degree in forensics from the International University in Struga, Republic of North Macedonia. She completed a qualification course in crime investigation at the Police Academy in Tirana. He is currently working as Deputy Commissioner of Criminal Investigation in the Directorate of Police in Tirana.

## 3. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work

The total volume of the dissertation is 178 pages. The structure of the dissertation work chosen by the author includes the following elements: Introduction, chapter I. Analysis of the situation and financial challenges facing organized crime, chapter II. Legal framework for combating organized crime, Chapter III. Organized crime in the Balkan countries Bulgaria, Albania and North Macedonia, Conclusion, Sources used, Appendices in the text.

In the introduction, J. Shehay justifies the social necessity of conducting such scientific research. It indicates the methods used in it, the problems and limitations in the dissertation work in the context of the complex geopolitical situation in the Western Balkans. The author accurately formulates the subject and purpose, as well as the main hypotheses of her research.

The first chapter defines the concept, the main characteristics and psychological aspects of organized crime, the legal and business reasons for its development. Briefly presented are the largest criminal organizations by revenue, as well as the most profitable criminal activities worldwide. The author also examines globalization and its impact on organized crime. A special place is devoted to threats from organized crime in the world, within the EU and in the Balkans.

The second chapter examines the legal framework for combating organized crime. First of all, the international legal measure and prevention are presented, the topics of the fight against organized crime within the framework of the UN, EU and bilateral cooperation are successively treated. J. Shehaj devotes several pages of his study to the tools, forms, capacities and planning of the fight against organized crime, as well as to the role of the government in these processes.

The third chapter focuses on the study of organized crime in the Balkans: in Bulgaria, Albania and North Macedonia. The candidate structures the content in the same way for each of the countries, namely: legal and financial aspects of organized crime, institutions and regulatory framework for combating it.

In the conclusion of his dissertation, Shehaj points out that organized crime is one of the main threats not only to people's security, but also to state security. To limit its negative effects, it is necessary to adopt a global and national strategy and action plan.

The sources used are 88, of which: 3 Macedonian authors and government documents, 6 Bulgarian publications, 1 Serbian publication, 81 sources are in English. The text uses 15 appendices - maps, diagrams, tables, etc.

#### 4. Contributions and significance of the development for science and practice

The main contributions of Julinda Shehaj's PhD thesis are set out in her abstract

1. A model has been proposed to improve the possibilities of ensuring a functioning system of financial and legal measures for a more effective fight against organized crime.
2. A new conceptual model of a system of measures and activities for a successful fight against organized crime is proposed.
3. A set of preventive financial measures against organized crime is proposed.
4. A set of repressive financial measures against organized crime is proposed.
5. Measures have been developed for early detection and identification of the causes of organized crime and undertaking financial measures to prevent organized crime.
6. Financial measures have been proposed and developed to prevent organized crime through high-tech communication systems.
7. The methods and aspects of optimization and functioning of the systems for combating organized crime have been researched and empirically proven.
8. Research has been conducted to improve coordination and cooperation between the competent state authorities in the collection of intelligence information to fight organized crime.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Julinda Shehaj could put into practice the theoretical conclusions and models of her candidate's thesis in her work as a leader in the state security structures. With her master's degree in law and her doctorate in finance, she becomes a

highly qualified specialist who possesses the necessary knowledge and abilities to counter organized crime.

## 5. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation work

The candidate's works include original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, some of which have been published in journals and proceedings of scientific conferences issued by international publishing houses. Julinda Shehaj has 3 (three) independent publications on the topic of the dissertation, published in non-refereed peer-reviewed scientific journals.

## 6. Assessment of compliance with minimum national requirements

The documents and materials presented by Yulinda Shehai meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LAD), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LAD and the relevant Regulations of VUZF for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the professional direction 3.8. Economy.

## 7. Abstract

The abstract has a volume of 35 pages. It contains a description of the main characteristics of the dissertation work, incl. structure and content, relevance of the chosen topic, summary presentation of the dissertation and publications on the topic of the dissertation. The abstract of the dissertation has been prepared in accordance with the requirements adopted for similar scientific works.

The Abstract clearly states the research methods, problems and limitations of the dissertation in the context of the complex geopolitical situation in the Western Balkans. Julinda Shehaj precisely formulated the subject and purpose as well as the main hypotheses of her research. In conclusion, the main conclusions and scientific-practical contributions of the dissertation work are presented.

Also attached is a Declaration from Julinda Shehaj, in which the author declares the originality of her dissertation, the absence of infringement of the copyrights of others and the complete absence of copied elements from her master's thesis in law.

## 8. Critical remarks and recommendations

Julinda Shehaj's dissertation has a number of merits, I have no specific remarks or

recommendations. I would like to formulate two questions to the author:

1. What are the target priorities of the fight against organized crime in Albania?
2. What are the main financial measures in the fight against organized crime?

## Conclusion

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet all 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. The presented materials and dissertation results correspond to the specific requirements of the Regulations for admission and training of doctoral students in the Higher School of Insurance and Finance.

The dissertation shows that the candidate Julinda Shehaj possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in Professional direction 3. 8. Economics, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Julinda Shehaj in the Department of Higher Education education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; Professional direction 3. 8. Economics.

August, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023

Reviewer: .....

Assoc. Prof. Valentina Grigorova-Gencheva, PhD