

# STATEMENT

**by assoc. prof. Biser Yordanov Krastev, PhD**  
**teacher in the Department of Economics and Finance**  
**at the University of Agribusiness and Rural Development**

of a doctoral thesis for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "**doctor**"

in the Field of higher education **3. Social, economic and legal sciences**

Professional field **3.8. Economics**

Doctoral program "**Finance, Insurance and Social Insurance**"

Author: **Julinda Shehaj**

Doctoral thesis topic: "**Financial and Legal Aspects of the Fight Against Organized Crime in the World and the Balkans Countries Bulgaria, Albania and Northern Macedonia**"

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

By order № 258/27.06.2023 of the Rector of the VUZF University Prof. Boris Velchev, D.Sc., I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on the topic: "**Financial and Legal Aspects of the Fight Against Organized Crime in the World and the Balkans Countries Bulgaria, Albania and Northern Macedonia**" for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in Field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional field 3.8. Economics. The author of the doctoral thesis is **Julinda Shehaj**, a PhD student of independent training at the department "Finance" at VUZF with research supervisors **prof. Mariela Deliverska, D.Sc.** and **prof. Ljupcho Stojceski, PhD.**

The materials submitted by the doctoral student include documents according to the presented inventory, as follows: dissertation, abstract, declaration of originality and credibility, certificate of the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional direction 3.8. Economics, a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation, copies of these publications, summaries of publications, and a curriculum vitae. The list of materials is complete and fully complies with the requirements of Art. 50 of the Rules for admission and training of doctoral students at VUZF.

## **2. Brief biographical details of the candidate**

Julinda Shehaj graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2014 from the Faculty of Law of the University of Tirana, Albania. In 2017, she obtained a master's degree in public law at the same university, and in 2020 she completed a second master's degree at the International University of Struga, North Macedonia. From 30.11.2016 to 27.01.2017, he interned at the Ministry of Justice, and in 2019 and 2020 he increased his qualifications by successfully completing a professional course on "Financial management and internal market consulting" and a qualification course for crime investigation specialist.

Julinda Shehaj started her working career an assistant lawyer in a private law firm in Tirana in the months from November 2018 to the end of March 2019. From April 1, 2019 to November 20, 2019, she worked as a legal advisor in another Albanian company, and from 03.08.2020 to date, she

is a crime investigation specialist at the Tirana Police Directorate. He speaks English, Italian and Spanish.

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

The doctoral thesis submitted for reviewing has a total volume of 161 pages. It consists of an introduction (6 pages), chapter one (42 pages), chapter two (30 pages), chapter three (69 pages), conclusion (2 pages) and a list of references (8 pages). The dissertation work also contains a title page, abstract and table of contents (4 pages in total). It includes 13 figures and 2 tables. The used literature covers 91 sources. Of these, 80 sources are in English, 9 in Bulgarian and 2 in Macedonian.

In the introduction are presented the social justice of the study, its subject and its purpose. The author has formulated one main, three special and one auxiliary hypotheses, the credibility of which should be confirmed or rejected, the research methods she uses, the time frame, the information base of the dissertation research and the degree of development of the problem.

**Chapter one**, entitled "Analysis of the situation and financial challenges of organized crime", is 42 pages long and consists of five paragraphs. In the first of them, a definition of organized crime is derived and its specific characteristics are presented. In the second paragraph, the reasons for the emergence and development of organized crime are analyzed - legal, psychological, economic. In the third paragraph, the financial dimensions of this crime are systematized by separate activities (drug trafficking, human trafficking, wildlife trafficking, arms trafficking, cybercrime, etc.). In the fourth paragraph, the process of globalization of organized crime is described, and in the last paragraph of chapter one, an assessment of the threats it poses in a global aspect is made, as well as within the European Union and the Balkans.

**Chapter two** is entitled "Legal framework for fight organized crime". It consists of two paragraphs and its total volume is 30 pages. The first paragraph explains the international aspects of the fight against organized crime and the international legal framework created for the purpose. Attention is paid to the role of prevention and the risk factors that affect the spread of organized crime globally and regionally. A review of international institutions (Interpol, Europol) and the coordination between them in relation to the fight against organized crime was carried out. In the second paragraph, the author explores in depth the tools that are used to fight crime at the international and national level.

**Chapter three** is entitled "Organized crime in the Balkan countries of Bulgaria, Albania and Northern Macedonia". It has a volume of 69 pages and consists of four paragraphs. In the first paragraph, PhD student Julinda Shehaj presented the Balkan drug and human trafficking routes and touched upon the problems of corruption and money laundering in the region. In the second paragraph of chapter three, an in-depth analysis and assessment of the state and trends in the development of organized crime in Bulgaria in organizational, institutional, legal and financial aspects have been carried out. The third paragraph explains the institutional, legal and financial aspects of the fight against organized crime in Albania. In a similar way, the author has researched separate aspects and dimensions, including financial ones, of the fight against organized crime in the Republic of Northern Macedonia.

From what has been said so far, it can be summarized that doctoral student Julinda Shehaj possesses detailed and in-depth theoretical knowledge of her dissertation topic, is capable of independent research, formulates research hypotheses, and reaches logical conclusions and

conclusions. On the basis of the declaration of originality and credibility presented by her, I believe that the dissertation work is not borrowed from foreign publications, the author's participation is clearly visible in it, and it correctly and accurately reflects the scientific positions of the PhD student.

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

The scientific contributions of the doctoral student are formulated in the abstract to the dissertation work. They can be divided into two main groups. The first of them contains contributions of a theoretical and methodological nature, and the second - contributions of a scientific and applied nature.

In this regard, **the contributions of a theoretical and methodological nature** in the dissertation work are the following:

1. A comprehensive and thorough review of the scientific literature in the field of legal and financial aspects of the fight against organized crime was carried out;
2. A new conceptual model has been proposed, containing a system of measures and activities for a successful fight against organized crime;
3. A model has been developed consisting of a set of preventive and repressive financial measures to prevent organized crime.

**The contributions of a scientific and applied nature** in the dissertation work are the following:

1. In scientific and applied terms, the validity of the main hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the dissertation work, that the fight against organized crime can be conducted by building an effective institutional system for its counteraction, has been proven;
2. It is proven that the methodology, on the basis of which the systems for fighting organized crime in Bulgaria, Albania and Northern Macedonia can be optimized, is relevant to the subject and purpose of the research;
3. Specific financial measures are proposed to prevent organized crime through the use of high-tech communication systems;
4. Research has been conducted to improve coordination and cooperation between competent state authorities in intelligence gathering to fight organized crime.

I believe that the contributions in the dissertation work faithfully and accurately reflect its scientific merits, as well as its significance for the development of science and practice in the field of the use of specific legal and financial instruments and mechanisms to counter organized crime in the studied Balkan countries. On this basis, I believe that the doctoral student has very good prospects for his future scientific development.

#### **5. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation work**

In the list of publications presented by Julinda Shehaj contains three scientific publications.

By nature, all three publications are scientific articles. The first and third of them were published in the journal "VUZF Review", and the second was published in the journal "Money and Culture". Both journals are included in the National Reference List of contemporary Bulgarian peer-reviewed scientific publications.

The first publication is entitled: "Legal and Financial Aspects of the Fight Against Organized Crime". It was published in Volume 8, №1/2023 of the journal "VUZF Review", pp. 31-41.

The second publication of PhD student Julinda Shehaj is entitled: "Legal Frameworks for Fight Against Organized Crime" and was published on pp. 46-59 in №4/2022 of "Money and Culture" journal.

The third publication is entitled: "Analysis of The Situation and Financial Challenges of Organized Crime in the Context of Globalization". It is published on pp. 24-35 in Volume 7, №4/2022 of the "VUZF Review" journal.

Julinda Shehaj's scientific articles are published in English, with her as their sole author. The publications are closely related to the topic of the dissertation research. This gives me reason to conclude that they contribute significantly to the development of economic and financial theory and practice, especially in Bulgaria, Albania and Northern Macedonia.

## **6. Assessment of compliance with minimum national requirements**

From the Julinda Shehaj's reference submitted on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional field 3.8. Economics can be summarized that she has 80 points. Of these, 50 points are awarded for the dissertation work developed by her and 30 points – for the 3 publications published in non-refereed journals with scientific reviewing. Therefore, the total minimum number of points by groups of indicators A and D from table 1 for the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences according to the annexes to Art. 1a of the Regulations for the implementation of law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria has been fulfilled.

## **7. Abstract**

The abstract is written according to the approved requirements. It includes the general characteristics of the dissertation work, its structure and content, a summary of the dissertation research, a reference to the scientific contributions, a list of publications on the subject of the doctoral thesis, a list of the literature used and a declaration of originality and reliability. The abstract fully contains the main results achieved in the dissertation work.

## **8. Critical remarks and recommendations**

Having carefully familiarized myself with the content of the dissertation work, I make two main points critical notes on its author. The first of them is that the tasks of the research are not formulated in the introduction, and the second is that structurally the dissertation is not well balanced, since the second chapter consists of 30 pages, and the third chapter has a volume of 69 pages. I recommend doctoral student Julinda Shehaj to deepen future researches her on the topic of the dissertation work, as well as to participate with her own publications in various national and international scientific conferences.

## **CONCLUSION**

The dissertation work has a completely finished form, **contains original scientific contributions** and can serve as a basis for future scientific research. It **meets all the requirements** of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations for the admission and training of doctoral students at VUZF University. This gives me the basis to **confidently award 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 field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional field 3.8. Economics, Doctoral Program Finance, Insurance and Social Insurance.

Plovdiv  
26.07.2023

Prepared the statement: .....  
(assoc. prof. Biser Krastev, PhD)