

STATEMENT

**From Assoc. Prof. Dr. Raya Nikolova Kanazireva,
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"**

on dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences
Professional field 3.8. Economics

Author: Diana Georgieva Nikolova

**Topic: Entrepreneurial ecosystems and creating an environment for entrepreneurship
development - policies and practices.**

1. General description of the materials presented

By Order No. 695 dated 15.12.2024 of the Rector of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance Prof. Boris Velchev, DSc, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to conduct a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic "Entrepreneurial ecosystems and creating an environment for entrepreneurship development - policies and practices" for obtaining doctoral degree in Higher Education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional field 3.8. Economics. The author of the dissertation is Diana Georgieva Nikolova - PhD student in independent training at the doctoral program "Finance, Insurance and Social Security" at VUZF.

The materials submitted by Diana Georgieva Nikolova include documents according to the submitted inventory: Dissertation, Dissertation Summary in Bulgarian and English, Declaration of originality, Reference for the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for obtaining the PhD in professional field 3.8. Economics, List of all publications, Copies of three publications on the topic of the dissertation, Abstracts of the three publications submitted for the competition, Curriculum vitae.

2. Brief biographical data about the candidate

The candidate holds a Master's degree in Business Management and Entrepreneurship and a Master's degree in Business Administration from New Bulgarian University. Diana Nikolova has been a business manager and has practical managerial experience of over 15 years.

3. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work

The dissertation has a total length of 175 pages and is structured in an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. The list of sources used consists of 269 titles in Bulgarian and English. The dissertation contains 7 tables, 2 graphs and 15 figures.

The introduction (pp. 5-8) discusses the relevance of the topic, the object and subject of the study, the objectives and methodology of the study. The problem under study is highly relevant, both in scientific and applied aspects, in terms of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Bulgaria, which plays an important role in the economic development of the country.

Chapter One (pp. 9-49) - "Theoretical Foundations of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. Approach, Analysis and Policies for Fostering" contains the theoretical framework of the thesis.

The nature of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is discussed; a comprehensive theoretical overview of the concepts, constructs and elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is presented. The theoretical analysis carried out in chapter one of the dissertation provides sufficient arguments to evaluate the PhD thesis as thorough and comprehensive.

Chapter Two (pp. 50-104) - "Mechanisms and Opportunities for Fostering and Developing the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem - A Study of Israel's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem" examines the case of Israel by applying a case study approach that includes a narrative study of secondary information. The author follows Eisenberg's theoretical framework and characteristically analyzes the elements of Israel's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Chapter Three (pp. 105-150) - "A Model for Effective Improvement of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Bulgaria," presents an analysis of the elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Bulgaria based on secondary data and established research on entrepreneurship in Bulgaria. The author puts forward fourteen recommendations on how to improve the attractiveness of the Bulgarian economy for starting entrepreneurial ventures.

The conclusion (pp. 151-153) contains a structured summary of the main results of the dissertation. Future research directions are outlined and contributions (p. 153) of the dissertation are formulated. Special attention is paid to the applicability of the results obtained.

4. Contributions and Significance of the Development for Science and Practice

According to the reference on scientific contributions (Dissertation Summary, pp. 37-38), the nature of the contributions can be differentiated into two groups:

- (1) Theoretical and methodological: a general interdisciplinary framework for the analysis of entrepreneurial ecosystem is derived on the basis of a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the elements and constructs that influence entrepreneurial ecosystems.
- (2) Practical-applied contributions: new knowledge is generated that is applicable to entrepreneurial practice in Bulgaria based on the case of Israel.

Thus grouped, the contributions are the result of the author's personal efforts.

5. Evaluation of the publications on the thesis

The candidate is the sole author of three articles in Bulgarian related to the topic of the dissertation. The articles have been published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals. Two of the articles reflect the results of the thesis

6. Assessment of fulfilment of the minimum national requirements

According to the submitted reference on the fulfilment by the candidate of the minimum national requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the professional field 3.8. Economics - the minimum national requirements have been fulfilled.

7. Dissertation Summary

The dissertation summary reflects in a correct and systematic way the overall text of the dissertation as well as the main results achieved in the dissertation work.

8. Critical remarks and recommendations

The only critical remark is about the formulation "factor analysis" - used in dissertation objectives of the research and in the list of scientific contributions. Factor analysis is a statistical method that is widely used in research in the social and economic sciences. To avoid confusion, in the dissertation under discussion, factor analysis is not applied but instead - analysis of the elements, constructs and concepts of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Stam & Van de Ven, 2021).

I recommend the candidate to deepen their research on the topic by collecting and analysing primary data by applying qualitative and quantitative research methods to confirm or reject the hypotheses put forward.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific and applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDAS) and the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDAS. The submitted materials and dissertation results fully comply with the specific requirements of the Regulations for Admission and Training of Doctoral Students at the Higher School of Insurance and Finance.

The dissertation work shows that the candidate Diana Georgieva Nikolova possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in Professional field 3. 8. Economics, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive evaluation for the presented doctoral dissertation and I propose the honorable scientific jury to award the degree of "Doctor" to Diana Georgieva Nikolova in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences; Professional field 3. 8. Economics.

10.02. 2025

Reviewer:



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Raya Kanazireva