

## **OPINION**

**from**

**prof., dr. DANIELA NIKOLOVA BOBEVA-FILIPOVA,**

**head of the Department of Economic Sciences**

**Plovdiv University, Paisii Hilendarski**

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

by: field of higher education. "Social, economic and legal sciences"

professional field "Economics"

Doctoral Program "Political Economy"

Author: **IULIAN ELINOV MOLLOV**

**Topic: Decentralized regional policy - an opportunity for sustainable development of the regions in Bulgaria**

**Research supervisor: Prof., Dr. Yordan Christoskov, Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski"**

### **1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student**

For the purposes of the procedure for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor", the candidate Julian Mollov submitted a total of 11 documents according to a list, which exhausts all unnecessary information sources for evaluating the candidate and his work, in accordance with the applicable legislation and regulations. The verification of the credibility and quality of the specified list of documents did not reveal any inconsistencies and makes it possible to draw up a complete and correct opinion on this procedure.

I know the PhD student in my capacity as head of the Department of Economic Sciences. He has solid academic and practical training. He has created the quality of a thorough scientist with a clear practical orientation of his knowledge and expertise. He participates in the department's scientific projects and shows interest not only in teaching but also in academic activities. An extremely fair and ethical young scientist, with the ability to work in a team and under a significant workload.

### **2. Relevance of the topic**

The dissertation focuses on an important economic problem, which acquires particular importance due to the high degree of disintegration of the regions. The failures of the ambitious European and national programs for the convergence of the regions require an analytical review of the foundations of the development of the regions and a rethinking of the regional policies. The new priorities of the

EU related to the "Green transition" and digitalization make the topic even more relevant, from the point of view of the expected effects of these changes on the economic development and convergence of the regions.

Regional disparities are increasingly becoming an obstacle to economic growth, a cause of underutilization of resources, dangerously high external and internal migration, growing poverty and marginalization of non-urbanized regions.

All this requires a good explanation to navigate the regional policy towards effective instruments that will create conditions for the convergence of the regions.

### **3. Comprehension of the problem**

A huge volume of scientific literature has been studied. The dissertation has analyzed several theoretical discussions on the main categories such as regional development, decentralization, sustainable development and others. The theoretical preparation of the author is undoubtedly complemented by his practical experience in the field of regional development, which expands the applied potential of the research.

The structure of the dissertation is built in a classic form of three chapters in accordance with the goals and objectives of the research. The object, subject, main thesis and purpose are clearly defined. The concept of decentralized regional policy is defined in an attempt to identify tools for its operationalization into factors that will reduce regional differences.

The frank critical tone of the dissertation, based on objective data and facts, is impressive, which speaks of the author's maturity and expertise in the investigated problem. The presentation is clear and understandable despite the complexity of the theories explored. Citations are correct.

### **4. Research methodology**

The research methodology includes a rather wide complex of quantitative and qualitative research methods, which corresponds to the complexity of the researched topic in the context of political economy. Analysis level successfully selected -

NUTS2 in the EU. Although the application of the correlation, regression and cluster analysis do not give definitive results about the dependencies between the selected groups of indicators, this conclusion rather emphasizes the complexity and multifactorial conditioning of decentralization.

From a methodological point of view, the study of a specific case (case study) related to the development model of the city of Plovdiv, its agglomeration area and the adjacent Thrace Economic Zone (TIZ) through decentralized policies for attracting investments in industrial zones, development of cultural tourism deserves special attention and IT business.

### **5. Assessment and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions**

The scientific and applied results of the research largely develop theory and policy in the field of regional economy and the political economy of regional development. Sufficient scientific arguments have been provided in favor of the thesis about the role of decentralization for the sus-

tainable development of regions, including the benefits and risks of decentralization. The dissertation is a rather extensive study, which has the ambition to cover an extremely complex complex of factors and measures of decentralization. The study of foreign experience complements and deepens the analysis. Of particular value in the dissertation work is the inclusion of the perspective of the "Green Transition".

The dissertation meets the high standards of academic work. The presented contribution points of the dissertation work are well argued in the scientific work. I agree with the contributions defined by the author, which have a significant practical-applied character. Some of them are presented as research results rather than contributions and in this context could be reformulated and summarized. Applied contributions could be directly used in the national strategy for regional development

## **6. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student**

The author has presented three independent publications and one co-authored publication in prestigious publications. The author's publications demonstrate a presence in the academic and public discussion about the need for decentralization in the development of regions. Acquaintance with their content shows that they are directly related to the topic of the dissertation work and present some of its results. Since I participated in the scientific conferences at which these publications were presented, it must be emphasized that they met with considerable interest among the scientific community.

The reference to the data on the scientometric indicators shows that the candidate exceeds the minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction "Economics".

The dissertation is an independent scientific study. The used literature is cited correctly. The innovative ideas and methodology give me reason to assess that there is no plagiarism.

## **7. Abstract**

The abstract correctly presents the dissertation work. The requirements in terms of volume, content and structure have been met.

## **8. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results**

The accumulated rich empirical material and a good methodological base provide an opportunity to continue and expand scientific research on the topic. Of particular interest would be the publication of the analysis of the expected effects of the green transition on the development of the regions and their convergence.

QUESTIONS:

- Both financial and administrative decentralization are examined in the dissertation. Is it possible in certain periods and with asynchrony between the two aspects of decentralization to have an adverse effect on the development of the regions?
- Doesn't the development of the regions mean catching up by the weaker regions, but with financial decentralization, is this possible?

## **QUNCLUSION**

The dissertation contains both scientific and 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), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of PU "Paisiy Hilendarski".

The dissertation shows that the doctoral student Julian Elinov Mollov possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty "Political Economy)" by 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-evaluated dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions. I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Julian Elinov Mollov in the field of higher education: "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.8. Economics (Political Economy) doctoral program "Political Economy"

29.08.2023

**Author of the Opinion:** .....

prof., dr. DANIELA NIKOLOVA BOBEVA-FILIPOVA