

OPINION

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on a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree „**Doctor**“
in field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences
professional field 3.6 Law
doctoral program “*Administrative law and administrative process*“

Author: *Tsvetanka Stefanova Hugasyan*

Subject: „*Conflict of interests and counteraction to corruption in the state administration*“

Academic supervisor: *Assoc. Prof. Bogdan Dragnev Yordanov, PhD - PU Paisii Hilendarsk*

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

By Order No. P33-948/15.03.2021 of the Rector of Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski I was appointed a member of the academic jury to provide a procedure for the defence of a dissertation entitled "Conflict of interest and counteraction to corruption in the state administration" for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field, 3.6 Law, doctoral program "Administrative law and administrative process“.

The author of the dissertation is Tsvetanka Stefanova Hugasyan, a doctoral student of independent training at the Department of Public Law, with academic supervisor Assoc. Prof. Bogdan Dragnev Yordanov, PhD from PU Paisii Hilendarski.

The set of paper materials presented by Tsvetanka Stefanova Hugasyan is in accordance with Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for development of the academic staff of Plovdiv University, and includes the following documents:

- request to the Rector of Plovdiv University for opening a procedure for defence of the dissertation;
- CV in European format;
- Minutes from the department council, related to reporting on the readiness for opening the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation work;
- abstract;

- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation, containing 3 publications;
- copies of scientific publications;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents.

2. Relevance of the topic

The topic developed in the dissertation related to the conflict of interests and corruption in the state administration is strongly relevant, not because it is a new one, but because corruption is one of the most debated problems facing our society. Corruption is a problem of growing public importance because it is one of the serious threats to democracy, the rule of law, which undermines citizens' trust in the state administration. This predetermines the relevance of the topic and the need for scientific research of the possibilities for prevention of the conflict of interests and counteraction to corruption, clarification and outlining the problems, giving objective information for further actions in the work of the administration, as well as possible changes in the Bulgarian legislation. As the doctoral student points out, in the future the fight against corruption in its various forms must continue to be a priority task both for the state institutions and for the whole Bulgarian society.

3. Knowledge of the problem

From the presented dissertation it can be concluded that the doctoral student Hugasyan has in-depth legal knowledge and detailed knowledge of the matter concerning the conflict of interests and corruption in the state administration. The doctoral student has conscientiously researched and analysed the main works of other scientists related to the topic of the researched issues, which she quoted correctly. The author shows independence, is able to argue her own theses and to draw clear and substantiated legal conclusions. The dissertation is written in good legal language.

4. Research methodology

For her research purposes the doctoral student uses a wide range of scientific methods, the main ones being - comparative law, historical, normative and systemic methods. The methodology used by Tsvetanka Hugasyan has allowed her to achieve the set goals of the dissertation research and to fulfil its tasks.

5. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and contributions

The work presented to our attention by Tsvetanka Hugasyan is an expression of the independent efforts of the doctoral student and is a scientific work on problems that have not been the subject of a comprehensive scientific study in the Bulgarian administrative law literature. The work is

distinguished by a clearly formulated goal and tasks, the logical sequence of the exposition, the strict observance of the requirements for the formation of a scientific text, and the precise reference to the used sources. The research is characterized by a very good knowledge and presentation of the theory and methodology of the problem.

The presented dissertation is structured in an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, including a list of abbreviations used and a bibliography. The paper comprises of 239 pages. It contains 167 footnotes.

In the first chapter conflict of interests and corruption are considered as phenomena in the state administration, and the concepts of conflict of interests and corruption, the scope and their characteristics are consistently clarified.

The second chapter discusses the monitoring of the level of corruption in Bulgaria and the measurement indices. Here, public attitudes to counteracting corruption are studied, as well as methods of prevention.

Chapter 3 examines the possibilities for counteracting and detecting conflicts of interest and corrupt practices, as well as the need for further action against conflicts of interest and corruption.

The emphasis in the last chapter is on the new anti-corruption legislation, the role of the Commission for Combating Corruption and Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property and the implementation of the Law on Counteraction of corruption and confiscation of illegally acquired property in the fight against corruption.

As significant scientific merits of the presented dissertation, I think there could be mentioned:

- The wide scope of the studied legislation. The author in the scope of research has included and analysed numerous international, European and national acts regulating conflicts of interest and corruption. Based on the in-depth comparative study of the considered problems, a number of conclusions and proposals have been made.

- The analysis of the levels of corruption in Bulgaria in recent years deserves attention, as the public attitudes for counteracting corruption, as well as the methods for prevention are studied.

- Detailed knowledge of the issues related to the development of the regulation of the conflict of interests and corruption, as well as of the existing Bulgarian and foreign scientific literature.

- The author shows academic systematization in the scientific search, approaches analytically and critically to the legal framework and the scientific literature on the subject.

- The mentioned scientific contributions undoubtedly show the abilities of the doctoral student for independent scientific research.

In order to help the doctoral student to improve the prepared dissertation, I would recommend that proposals de lege ferenda be formulated in a clear and definite way, which would contribute to the improvement of the Bulgarian anti-corruption legislation.

The presented work has a strong practical significance, in view of the constant emergence of specific situations of conflict of interest and corruption in the state administration. The developed work of the doctoral student would be useful not only for students and teachers, but also for a much wider range of citizens, employees in the administration and government agencies.

6. Assessment of the doctoral student's publications and personal contribution

A list of three publications of the doctoral student on the topic of the dissertation is presented. The publications are the result of the author's research related to the dissertation. They reflect some moments of the dissertation work. The publications of the doctoral student Hugasyan show that the scientific interests and results of her activity are in the public domain of the scientific and specialized circles. The publications are the result of the personal efforts of the doctoral student and are undoubtedly influenced by her rich practical experience in the field of public administration.

7. Abstract

The presented abstract in a volume of 41 pages is compiled according to the requirements. It correctly and accurately reflects the content of the dissertation, reflecting the main results and gives a clear idea of the contributions in it.

8. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contribution and results

Given the usefulness of the presented research, both for theory and practice, I recommend the work to be published. In view of the relevance of the issue and the achieved results of the scientific research, the competent state bodies should be acquainted with them in an appropriate order.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of Republic of Bulgaria (ASDARB), the Implementation Regulations of the ASDARB, and the respective Regulations of PU Paisii Hilendarski. The presented materials and dissertation results fully comply with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Law, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the University of Plovdiv for application of the ASDARB.

The dissertation shows that doctoral student Tsvetanka Stefanova Hugasyan has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the doctoral program "Administrative Law and Administrative Process" demonstrating qualities and skills for independent research.

Based on the above, I confidently give my *positive assessment* of the research presented by the above reviewed dissertation, abstract, results and contribution, and I propose to the esteemed academic jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" of Tsvetanka Stefanova Hugasyan in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field, 3.6 Law, doctoral program “Administrative law and administrative process“.

21st April 2021

Opinion by:

Assoc. Prof. Margarita Cheshmedzhieva, PhD