

Review

From: Professor Dr. Svetlana Aleksandrova- Zlatanska, Department of “International Economic Relations and Business”, University of National and World Economy.

of dissertation thesis for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor by : by: field of higher education. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction .3.8 Economics, doctoral program .Political economy

Author YULIYAN ELINOV MOLLOV

Dissertation Topic: Decentralized Regional Policy - Opportunity for Sustainable Development of thee Regions In Bulgaria

Research supervisor:: Prof. Yordan Hristoskov, Ph.D, University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"

1. General presentation of the doctor procedure

Reason for presenting the opinion: participation in the composition of the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation” Decentralized Regional Policy - Opportunity for Sustainable Development of thee Regions In Bulgaria” according to Order No. РД-21-1440/ 03.07.2023г of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski". for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.8. Economics, doctoral program "Political Economy". The author of the dissertation is a full-time student at the Department of Economic Sciences, Department. with scientific supervisor Prof. Yordan Hristoskov.

The set of paper materials submitted by the doctoral student is in accordance with Article 36 (1) of the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Plovdiv University includes the following documents: - a request to the Rector of the PU to disclose the procedure for the defense of dissertation; curriculum vitae in European format; – protocol from the departmental meeting related to reporting the readiness to open the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation work; dissertation work; abstract; – a list of scientific publications on the subject of the dissertation; copies of scientific publications; – list of noted citations; – declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;

Brief biographical data about the doctoral student - Julian Mollov is a doctoral student since 2019 at the Department of Economic Sciences, Plovdiv University. The doctoral student has been working since 2006 in the administration of the Regional Center for the South Central Region, before that in the regional administration of Plovdiv. The doctoral student has practical knowledge and expert activity on the subject under consideration.

2. Relevance of the topic

The chosen research topic is current and has been debated for quite a year. For the first time, with a statistical toolkit, it is assessed at the national and regional level to what extent the decentralization factors are decisive for regional development and for overcoming regional imbalances.

3. Research methodology

The research methods are well chosen for achieving the set of the goal and the research tasks. The research methods are well chosen, the author skillfully used analysis and synthesis of scientific theoretical statements, correlation, regression and cluster analysis. A specific case study has presented related to the development model of the city of Plovdiv, attracting investments in the Trakia industrial zone.

4. . General characteristics of the presented dissertation work

The dissertation is structured in a standard way, formed in sections and subsections, but in accordance with the set goal, subject and tasks of the research. The dissertation consists of an introduction, 3 chapters and a conclusion. 304 literary and Internet sources of specialized scientific literature in different languages, normative documents were used and analyzed.

The author examined the decentralization of the regions in a theoretical aspect, compared the decentralization of the EU member states regarding administrative and fiscal decentralization. The main goal set by the author is to prove the advantages of the decentralized approach for regional development and the formulated tasks. The topic of the dissertation is considered in a theoretical and practical aspect.

The dissertation has several limitations, one of which is the scope of the period 2020. Trends after 2020, specifically for Bulgaria in the context of worsening demographic and economic indicators would enrich the analysis and would also provoke questions about the continuing difference in the development of the regions in Bulgaria.

The main thesis of the research is to prove the interaction between decentralization, regional development, investments and subsidies from the state. The first chapter summarizes and systematizes the main features of regional politics, the new concepts of territorial development as spatial territorial development, the concept of regional disparities and others. The concepts of sustainable and balanced development are affected.

The author gives a definition of regionalization and he has made a quantitative assessment of decentralization as a factor for regional development. The effects of the integrated territorial approach for regional development in the EU member states are shown. It is noteworthy that the author did not make a distinction between financial and fiscal decentralization, both concepts are used unambiguously in places in the dissertation. In conclusion, in the first chapter the author has systematized well the theoretical and applied aspects of regional development policy.

The second chapter contains the main scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation work. The doctoral student has made a thorough comparative analysis of the degree of decentralization of the EU countries. This part is distinguished by a regression analysis, through which the indicators of decentralization and their degree of influence on regional growth and

inequalities were investigated. A strength of the study is the successful analysis of the factors for fiscal decentralization across the EU countries. The statistical cluster analysis, the appropriate selection of data, indicators and the choice of clustering algorithm are worth noting.

Thanks to the clustering based on connectivity, the author was able to compare and group the countries based on connectivity between decentralization and the social progress of the regions.

The third part of the dissertation is dedicated to Bulgaria's regional policy, institutionalization of management and the effects of European funds on regional growth, it is due to a lack of synergy between the interventions. Regarding the integrated territorial investments that will be implemented for the period 2021-2027, the author has presented the relevant challenges and possible gaps that may arise during their implementation. Good practice for territorial and regional development is the Plovdiv municipality policy.

A good practice for territorial and regional development is the policy is how Plovdiv municipality attract foreign investments, the IT industry and outsourced business services, through cluster for information and communication technologies and the creation of a technological business park. In support of a model for shared management, planning and implementation at the local level is a specific case (case study) of the Plovdiv -19 project. The green transition is less well represented, as it is yet to be implemented within the framework of the "Regions in Growth" national program.

It is worth noting that the author has tried to present the integration of green transition policy and territorial cohesion at the European level, and accordingly, on the basis of good practices, to derive the importance of the interaction between decentralization and ecological transformation. In this regard, the author's position stands out, that decentralization is a factor for a successful transition to a low-carbon economy.

In summary, the doctoral student is well acquainted with the researched issues, he has an excellent knowledge about statistical tools.

5. Assessment of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

A total of publications is four, they have been presented in conference proceedings. The author's analytical conclusions and evaluations are noticeable in the dissertation.

The attached reference for the contributions in the dissertation correctly reflects the results of the doctoral student. The doctoral student presented publications related to the dissertation work, in which problems of decentralization and sustainable development, green transition and regional development, and integrated territorial investments were analyzed.

The publications add additional scientific value and they present well the main aspects of the thesis. The presented publications are sufficiently accurate and meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB and the relevant Regulations of the Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski".

My overall assessment is that the dissertation **is a self-completed author's research in which the research tasks are successfully completed and the main goal is achieved**, as well as. The main theoretical and applied results of the dissertation allow to give a high overall positive assessment of the dissertation. The dissertation is a serious independent theoretical-applied study.

6. ABSTRACT

The abstract is 32 pages and it presents the structure and content of the dissertation, as well as the research results in a synthesized form. The abstract includes a reference to the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained in the dissertation and a list of the author's publications.

7. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

My overall opinion is positive and I give a high grade for the dissertation work achievements. In the following studies, analyses will be better to cover the disparities in the development of municipalities in Bulgaria. On the basis of the comparative analysis the author investigates the effects of the European Green Deal and integrated territorial investments for regional growth and an eco-green environment.

CONCLUSION

My overall assessment is that the dissertation work represents a self-completed author's research in which the research tasks have been successfully completed and the main objective has been achieved. At the same time, the main theoretical and applied results of the dissertation allow to give a high overall positive assessment of the dissertation. The dissertation is a serious independent theoretical-applied study.

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to the science and meet all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB and the relevant Plovdiv University rules.

The dissertation shows that the doctoral student Julian Elinov Mollov possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty 3.8 Economics, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conducting of scientific research.

According 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 Julian Elinov Mollov . in the field of higher education: Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.8 Economics, doctoral program Political Economy.

30.08. 2023..... г.

Prepared the review::

(подпис)

Svetlana Aleksandrova-Zlatanska