



**Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski”
Law Faculty**



**LAW FACULTY
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**ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE NORMATIVE
LEGAL ACTS**

ABSTRACT

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Title: Economic Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Relevance and Significance of the Dissertation

In recent decades, the issues of the effectiveness and quality of the normative process have been established as key topics in the public and legal spheres. The need for their study and improvement has become increasingly urgent due to a number of systemic problems accompanying the process. This necessitates a thorough and well-reasoned design of normative legal acts and the legal norms they contain, taking into account the specific characteristics of socio-economic processes and patterns. The aim is to ensure the effectiveness of the law and to achieve the desired results, in other words to reduce the gap between what should be (what is expected) and what is actually achieved.

In response to these problematic areas, various mechanisms are being sought to improve the legislative process. One such modern and complex tool is impact assessment, which is becoming increasingly important as a key tool to support government decision-making and ensure the effectiveness, predictability and transparency of normative legal acts.

Thus, the topic is both relevant and significant, as in today's dynamic economic and legal environment, the legislative process requires not only formal compliance with regulations but also a deep analysis of the economic and social effects of their implementation. Legislation cannot be considered in isolation from economic processes, and the assessment of the economic impact of normative acts provides an opportunity to integrate economic logic into lawmaking. This is achieved by combining the legal and non-legal (economic) perspectives, enabling better planning, analysis, and optimization of the processes involved in creating legal norms.

The application of the assessment enables greater certainty for both businesses and citizens, as the more precise formulation of legal norms contributes to a clearer and more stable regulatory framework. This is crucial for building a legal system that ensures stable economic development and social security.

The Economic impact assessment also plays an important role in the rational allocation of resources and the regulation of lawmaking behavior. It serves as a criterion for analyzing the relationship between the objectives set and the results achieved, helping to rationalize expenditures, optimize public administration, and foster economic development. The introduction of clear standards and control mechanisms through the assessment contributes to the regulation of the legislative process.

From both a scientific and practical perspective, the topic represents a significant innovation, as there are limited theoretical resources on this issue in the Republic of Bulgaria.

This study expands scientific knowledge and fosters discussions in the field of legal theory while simultaneously offering practical solutions for improving the legislative process. The multidisciplinary approach, which combines legal-sociological, normative, and economic methods, allows for a more in-depth analysis of the complexity of the process and lays the foundation for integrated solutions from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Finally, the study calls for further research and development of practice, as well as the improvement of the regulatory framework of the tool, the establishment of specialized institutional structures, the standardization of methodologies, and more.

1. Object and Subject of the Dissertation

The object of the study is the relationship between law and economics, with impact assessment playing a key role in integrating economic logic and methods into the legislative process. This relationship is examined through several main aspects:

- The role of the mechanism for assessing economic impact in improving the quality of normative acts and its influence on the effectiveness of legal norms affecting the economic sphere, as well as its implications for the legal system as a whole.
- The connection between economic impact assessment and the quality of lawmaking, as well as their influence on the economy.
- The broader context of the interaction between law and economics, where impact assessment plays a pivotal role in integrating economic logic and methods into the legislative process.

The subject of the dissertation is the tool for assessing the economic impact of normative legal acts as a means of enhancing the quality and predictability of the legislative process, as well as the effectiveness of legal norms in the field of economic relations, and consequently, the economic relations themselves.

2. Aim and Objectives of the Dissertation

The primary aim of the study is to expand knowledge about the concept of impact assessment and its place in legal theory. Additionally, the study aims to analyze the mechanism for assessing the economic impact of normative acts and to examine its role in improving the efficiency of the legislative process, legal norms, and its influence on the legal system and the economy.

To achieve the stated aim, the following research objectives have been formulated: **Theoretical Objectives** – To examine the historical development and international practices in the field of impact assessment of normative acts; To explore the concept of impact assessment and the concept of economic impact assessment; To study the theoretical and methodological aspects of impact assessment, as well as its significance in the context of legal science; To identify the main principles and criteria related to impact assessment.

Analytical Objectives – To analyze the current legal and non-legal framework for impact assessment of normative acts in the Republic of Bulgaria; To examine the relationship between economic impact assessment and the quality of the legislative process; To explore the economic aspects of impact assessment; To investigate the role of impact assessment in improving the legal system and the economic environment. **Methodological Objectives** – To describe and analyze the methods and techniques for assessing economic impact used in the Republic of Bulgaria; To study the criteria and indicators for conducting an effective impact assessment; To examine best practices related to impact assessment and their application. **Practical Objectives** – To identify problem areas and challenges in the application of economic impact assessment; To propose specific steps for improving the practice of impact assessment that will enhance the efficiency of the legislative process.

3. Research Thesis and Hypotheses

The research thesis is expressed in the assertion that the economic impact assessment of normative acts is a valuable tool for enhancing the quality and efficiency of the legislative process in the Republic of Bulgaria. This tool fosters the interaction between law and economics, possessing the potential to contribute to the creation of a more effective, transparent, and predictable legal system capable of addressing contemporary socio-economic challenges. This, in turn, improves the efficiency of economic relations. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the concept is essential for its optimal application.

In this context, the following working hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: The economic impact assessment of normative acts, as a critical tool, leads to an improvement in the efficiency of the legislative process in the Republic of Bulgaria while simultaneously reducing negative economic consequences for the business environment.

Hypothesis 2: Integrating economic logic and objectivity into the legislative process through the tool of impact assessment results in the creation of high-quality legal norms. This

not only increases the trust of citizens and businesses in the legal system but also enhances the quality and efficiency of both the legal framework and economic relations.

Hypothesis 3: The lack of standardized methodologies, effective regulatory frameworks, administrative capacity, theoretical studies, and other supporting elements for impact assessment leads to its formal application. This, in turn, increases administrative burdens and creates negative economic consequences, hindering adaptation to modern socio-economic challenges.

4. Methodology of the Dissertation

The methodology of the research reflects the complex nature of the problem and necessitates the use of various approaches. The methodological framework primarily incorporates descriptive and analytical approaches. Although the study can be considered interdisciplinary, involving economic methods and logic, the primary focus is placed on the legal perspective.

The primary approach employed in the research combines the sociology of law with the normative approach. This reflects the dual nature of impact assessment—its socio-economic manifestation (what exists in reality) on the one hand, and its normative nature (what ought to be) on the other.

The methodology aims to integrate these approaches into a unified model that facilitates a deeper understanding of the concept of impact assessment, its legal and economic characteristics, its potential, challenges, and impacts, as well as recommendations for its improvement.

5. Limitations of the Dissertation Research

The issue of impact assessment, particularly in the context of economic impacts, is relatively new within Bulgarian legal theory. The lack of sufficient specialized research poses challenges to constructing a comprehensive and systematic theoretical framework. This results in reliance on international practices and literature, which may create difficulties in reflecting the specific characteristics of the Bulgarian legal and economic system.

The empirical research in the dissertation focuses primarily on the application of the mechanism for assessing economic impacts within the Republic of Bulgaria.

The absence of in-depth quantitative analysis or modeling of economic impacts leaves certain aspects of the effectiveness of impact assessment unexplored. Additionally, the lack of national studies and specific data on the effectiveness of impact assessment in Bulgaria

hampers a thorough empirical analysis and limits the ability to establish a strong link between the theoretical framework and practical application.

6. Sources of Information

The information sources used in the dissertation include:

- Bulgarian and foreign scientific publications.
- Public data from national and international organizations: National Center for Parliamentary Studies, Council of Ministers, World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and others.
- Previous research, periodicals, journals, and internet information sources.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is structured in accordance with the main goal and tasks set, as well as the chosen object and subject of research. It consists of 274 pages. The structure includes a table of contents, list of abbreviations, introduction, three chapters, conclusion, declaration, and bibliography. The work contains 12 tables and 2 graphs. The cited literature includes a total of 189 sources in English and Bulgarian. In each chapter, the cited literature is listed, and certain notes have been made.

III. BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

The introduction discusses the relevance and significance of the researched issue. The object, subject, goal, and tasks of the dissertation are defined. The research thesis and hypotheses are formulated; the methodology used is described; the main issues identified during the research are outlined; as well as the author's view on the scientific contribution of the work.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CONCEPT OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF NORMATIVE LEGAL ACTS

The first chapter of the study generally presents the main characteristics and examines the concept of impact assessment of legal normative acts. Initially, the focus is directed toward the historical development and emergence of the idea of impact assessment. The chapter then delves into the methodological and theoretical aspects of impact assessment as a

multi-layered phenomenon – its normative properties, as well as its legal and non-legal characteristics. Attention is given to the systems approach and the role of impact assessment within the legal system. Impact assessment is established as an important tool in the execution of the regulatory function of law, which, in general, means that law is the main regulator of social relations, and impact assessment is a tool for measuring the effectiveness of these regulations. Considering the nature of this tool, a major part of the research focuses on the sociology of law and the sociological approach. Finally, predictability and security are discussed as criteria for quality regulation, as well as the place of the concept of impact assessment in legal theory.

1. History and Conceptualization of the Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts (IANLA)

The conceptual roots of this mechanism can be traced back in time, and the modern concept ideologically stems from the necessity of combining economic and political methods and principles, united around goals such as achieving optimal use of public resources and the effectiveness of the legislative process, respectively, of normative acts.

The idea that legal acts should seek and implement certain impacts on various societal spheres is not new. Since ancient times, the tendency of those in power to incorporate and adapt different policies, ideals, and principles to reality, in order to bring daily life, economic and spiritual relations, as well as state governance, into reasonable regulatory frameworks, has been a matter of necessity and, to some extent, survival. Examples supporting this argument can be found as early as deep antiquity¹, the Roman Republic², and the Modern Era³. Such examples are also present in our history.

It is accepted that in the changing historical context of existence and the different views of theory and doctrine, the current law is not isolated from social, economic, and political processes. Legislators today must try to analyze the causes behind the negative manifestations of previous and current normative texts, then determine what positive elements exist in them to preserve. Subsequently, they aim to improve the entire legislative system by drawing information and knowledge from various sources (other countries, organizations,

¹ *Plato*. *Laws*. Sofia: ISONM, 2006, pp. 259-264, 297. See also: *Aristotle*. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Sofia: GAL-IKO, 1993, pp. 37, 245-246.

² *Cicero, M. T.* *On the Republic. On the Laws*. Sofia: East-West, 2019, p. 187.

³ *Kelly, J. M.* *A Short History of Western Legal Theory*. Sofia: Riva, 1998, pp. 181-182, 196.

experts, consultations with stakeholders, etc.), assessing the possible costs, risks, and alternatives.⁴

Impact assessment, as a new tool in lawmaking, is a modern phenomenon that has gained significant ground due to the conditions and trends characteristic of the second half of the 20th century. The expansion of state intervention (in this case, the USA, which is the birthplace of regulatory impact assessment (RIA)) in market and social life regulation led to a large increase in the number and complexity of normative acts, as well as an excessive increase in administrative burdens.

In the European Union (EU), RIA, as a new and useful tool, has become mandatory through its institutionalization within the normative environment and has become a primary measure for assessing the activity of normative acts within national and even international law. The European Commission adopted the impact assessment methods from the United Kingdom. However, positive results for significantly improving regulation—both qualitatively and quantitatively—are rarely realized in practice. Nonetheless, the United Kingdom and the EU have expressed their positions on the benefits of RIA.

The concept of introducing a functional practice to resolve systemic problems in governance and the legislative process in Bulgaria began in the early 21st century. With the adoption of the Law on Limiting Administrative Regulation and Administrative Control Over Economic Activity in 2003, the first steps were taken toward reducing state intervention in the economy through the introduction of reasoned opinions and impact assessments. Although the institutionalization of IA has progressed slowly, key initiatives such as changes to the Law on Normative Legal Acts in 2016 have strengthened its legal framework.

2. Methodological and Theoretical Aspects of Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts (IANLA)

The normative characteristics of IANLA represent a key aspect in the evaluation of this tool, as normativity is a fundamental feature of law. It reflects the obligation and structures law as a system of norms distinguished by binding force, ensured through state enforcement. IANLA, as a legal mechanism, draws its strength from its normative character, positioning it within the legal system. The normative component of IANLA allows the legal regulation process to be based on clear, measurable criteria, ensuring order, predictability, and coordination, all necessary for the effective management of the normative reality.

⁴ Wauters, B., De Benito, M. *The History of Law in Europe*, Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018, p. 168.

If we focus on one of the many manifestations of law, specifically as the main regulator of social relations, it can be assumed that as a necessary element of the legal system, the IANLA tool represents a complex and multi-layered phenomenon. Part of it possesses a legal character — primarily regulated in Article 18a, Article 18b, and Chapter II of the *Law on Normative Legal Acts* with new provisions from 2016. As a component of our legal-normative reality, containing legal norms and possessing legal force, IANLA can be viewed as a legal-normative phenomenon, i.e., it has the quality of *normativity*. Therefore, for lawyers, this normative aspect of the IANLA, which is legally established — seen from the "inside-out" perspective — takes priority.

The primary purpose of IANLA, as a specifically legally embedded mechanism, is to be successfully realized as a tool for making rational decisions by the legislator, adhering to certain principles, rather than replacing political decisions themselves. Originally a political tool with a pronounced economic nature, it is institutionalized in our legal system in the context of quality law-making, according to the needs of the law. It then transforms into a legal mechanism designed to optimize and reduce the shortcomings of the legal system. Its functions are related to information gathering, analysis, measurement, argumentation, and supporting the process of turning policy into law, which then leads to socio-economic results.

In addition to its legal-normative component, the IANLA mechanism also contains a non-legal component (soft law), associated with policies that support the functioning of the legal system as a whole. These are all those acts that do not have binding legal force and contain rules related to regulation. At the supranational level (within the EU), the tool is dominated by its non-legal part, which leads to contradictory results, as seen from the information presented in the discussion. The challenges in this sense are related to finding a balance and flexibility between hard law and soft law, their interaction, coordination, the characteristics of the applying subject, as well as the needs of dynamic economic relations and the legal system.

3. The Systemic Approach to Law and the Law-Making Process – Influence on IANLA

The mechanism of IANLA can be examined through the theories of general systems theory and the systemic approach in law, where the legal system is viewed as part of an open social system. This approach emphasizes the interacting elements within law and the social environment, with IANLA providing a method for assessing the effects of normative decisions on the economy and society. The IANLA process provides an evaluation of both

new and existing legal norms, examining their impact on the current legal structure and allowing the legal system to adapt to changes, control, and optimize the law-making process.

Impact Assessment (IA) serves as a tool for evaluating legal norms, providing both ex ante and ex post assessments of their effects. As a mandatory element of the law-making process in Bulgaria, IA analyzes the political, legal, and economic aspects of normative acts. The use of IA in law-making leads to qualitative and quantitative changes in the legal content, establishing criteria for the quality of the normative product and assessing the results of the normative acts' implementation. Thus, it highlights the connection between IA, law-making, and the legal system.

4. The Regulatory Function of Law. The Instrumental Nature of Law and the IANLA

Legal regulation is aimed at the social reality, and according to Stefka Naumova, it results from three activities, corresponding to three stages: 1) formation of legal norms – this is the stage of law-making; 2) the emergence of rights and obligations – law in action; 3) the realization of law – reflecting the relationship between the legal system and human behavior.⁵ The regulatory function is one of the core, inherent functions of law. In the role of law as the primary societal regulator, we find its societal significance.

In a certain sense, regulation also exists in the process of creating normative acts, i.e., law itself regulates its creation and realization. In this context, and in harmony with law's inherent properties of being insightful, effective, and flexible, as well as its pursuit of order and security, it can be said that in its role as a regulator, law not only regulates external objects but also demonstrates the capacity for self-regulation. By adopting the norms regulating IANLA in this context, as an internally obligatory tool for law, we enhance our understanding of their legal essence, the rationality of their content, their potential for action, the optimal limits of their application, and the degree of state intervention in the law-making process. The ultimate goal is positive internal results for the legal system, and for this, achieving a state of homeostasis within it is essential.

The goals of law play a crucial role in its regulation, reflecting both the path already traveled and the future directions of the legal system. Failure to achieve these goals is an indicator of defects in law, leading to negative legal consequences. The sociology of law,

⁵ Naumova, St. *Sociology of Law, Part One*, TEDIna, 1994, p. 43.

including the instrumental approach, views law as a means of social control used to achieve specific results within society.

The instrumental approach to law is widely accepted in both European and American sociology of law. Law is perceived as a technical tool for achieving social changes and managing social relations. In the context of this approach, the IA mechanism plays an important role in optimizing the legal system, acting as a tool for both internal and external adjustment of social regulation and political processes.

5. The Sociological Approach to Law – Legal-Sociological Issues Confronting IANLA

A characteristic feature of IANLA is its dichotomous nature: on one hand, it functions within the legal environment as a legal-normative tool that supports the functioning of law — preventing defects and shortcomings in the legal framework, integrating various socio-economic facts, and subsequently evaluating the performance of these facts, now with a legal form; on the other hand, it operates outside of this framework — as an assistant in the effective interaction with other systems in society (in our case, the effects of policies on economic relations) and society itself. Therefore, to better understand the essence of IA, it is important to also consider the external perspective, focusing on the social manifestations of law.

The sociological approach emphasizes the need for an open and flexible process of law-making, supported by qualitative information, to create laws that reflect real social conditions. Key issues in the sociology of law relate to the mechanisms of the emergence of social norms and their transformation into official rules, the effectiveness of legislation, and its impact on the social environment, among others. IA plays a significant role in evaluating these issues, as it ensures a balance between the content of the normative act and its rationality.

Law is a dynamic phenomenon that must adapt to social conditions while maintaining normative consistency as a basis for development and economic benefits. In this context, the sociology of law and sociological techniques play an important role in the law-making process, helping to understand public opinion and value attitudes. The legal system must adapt to social dynamics, while ensuring the legitimacy and stability of law through rational and well-founded decisions.

6. Predictability and Security in Law as Criteria for Quality (Rational) Regulation

The terms "unpredictability" and "uncertainty" become relevant in the context of the law-making process when objective changes in the legal and social environment are observed. These terms are used to analyze potential risks and threats associated with the inability to predict how laws and regulations will impact society. Unpredictability is associated with the inability to foresee a specific outcome, while uncertainty encompasses factors that complicate the process of forecasting and accounting for the legal effects. In the legal context, these terms relate to the difficulty of creating effective and stable legal norms. A high degree of unpredictability and uncertainty can lead to ambiguity in the legal framework, making it difficult to enforce legal norms and increasing legal insecurity. The assessment of these terms is crucial for the effectiveness of the legal system and is an important criterion in the law-making process.

Predictability and security of law are two fundamental principles that condition the effectiveness of the legal system. Historically, these principles have been important since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, who sought stability and constancy in laws. There are distinctions between formal and material legal security and predictability, which relate to both procedural compliance with requirements and the content and impact of laws on society. Formal security ensures that normative acts are clear and non-contradictory, while material security takes into account real economic and social conditions. This raises the issue of the balance between predictability and flexibility of law. The application of RIA is an important tool for addressing this issue, as it allows lawmakers to identify potential risks and make the law more effective and adaptable to changing economic conditions.

7. The Place of Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts in Legal Theory

The place of IANLA in legal theory can be traced historically back to utilitarianism, a branch of liberalism that emphasizes minimal interference in personal and economic life, as well as rationality and individual freedom. With the development of utilitarianism and the focus on maximizing social welfare, IANLA emerged as a mechanism combining economic methods and legal assessments to achieve effective and well-reasoned decisions in law. This tool provides an opportunity for both qualitative and quantitative analysis of public policies, helping to rationalize legal and economic processes.

IANLA plays a central role in legal science, integrating into the theory of the rational legislator and finding its place in jurisprudence — the science of the rational legislative

process. The legislator is obliged to present rational arguments to justify the proposals made de lege ferenda as the basis for creating quality legislation. This is also the case for the Bulgarian legislator, who institutionalizes the legal requirement to motivate proposals de lege ferenda in Articles 26 and 28 of the Law on Normative Legal Acts.⁶ Jurisprudence shifts the focus of legal theory, moving it from the interpretation of existing laws to the very process of their creation. IANLA also plays a role in controlling the enacted law and is not only a method of assessment but also part of efforts to balance law and politics in the legislative process.

CHAPTER TWO

IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF NORMATIVE ACTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA – ECONOMIC MANIFESTATIONS OF THE MECHANISM, PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA, TYPES, PROBLEMATIC AREAS, AND DEFICIENCIES

The second chapter of the study focuses on the evaluation of the economic impact of legal norms both in the context of the European Union (EU) and the Republic of Bulgaria. The primary topics explored are related to the impact assessment mechanism in the EU and Bulgaria, the evaluation of the economic impact of normative acts, the regulation and content of the tool in Bulgaria, principles, criteria, and indicators in the legislative process and impact assessment, procedural stages and analytical steps in the impact assessment process, and problematic areas and criticisms in the application of impact assessment. Therefore, this chapter provides an in-depth view of the practical application of IANLA and its significance for achieving quality and effective law-making, as well as the potential problem areas in the assessment process.

1. The " Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts " Mechanism

Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts as a modern practical mechanism, primarily focusing on the ex ante and ex post evaluation of normative acts, is a result of and has been adopted as a key component of the so-called "better regulation" program in the EU.

⁶ Cherneva, B. *Jurisprudence and Legal Jurisprudence*. Sofia: Siela, 2020, pp. 365-366.

This program aims to reform and manage regulation throughout the various stages of the political cycle, including the creation and monitoring of normative acts.

Impact assessment is seen as a crucial tool in improving the quality of law-making within the EU. The evaluation process is evidence-based, relying on consultations with stakeholders to ensure that decisions are made based on real data and results.

In Bulgaria, IANLA is also integrated into the legislative process, with the legal framework requiring assessments to be carried out during both the preliminary and subsequent stages. Although there is no single definition of IA in the literature, the widely accepted understanding is that it is an analytical tool that aids decision-making and enhances the quality of normative acts. The importance of IA lies in providing the necessary information and analyses to optimize the legislative process and ensure regulatory efficiency, while also evaluating the economic consequences of their implementation.

2. Economic Aspect of Impact Assessment, Effects on the Lawmaking Process, and the Environment

The economic manifestation of the impact assessment mechanism has evolved as a key tool for optimizing regulatory policies and effectively managing public spending and resources. Historically, the economic arguments for state intervention in a market economy are based on the need to correct market and regulatory failures that hinder fair and competitive market functioning. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), regulatory intervention should seek a balance between the free market and the need for regulation. The EU's strategy for quality lawmaking emphasizes the importance of tools like IA, which not only reduce bureaucracy but also generate long-term economic benefits.

The economic impact assessment (EIA) plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable growth and economic efficiency. The OECD highlights that systematically applied IA methods can help identify the most effective economic policies and provide a clearer understanding of the distributive effects of regulations on different social groups. Moreover, IA must take into account not only economic but also social and environmental consequences of normative acts, as poorly designed regulations may lead to negative externalities. Restoring economies in uncertain conditions requires cooperation among government bodies, experts, and stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of the lawmaking process and ensure sustainable economic growth.

Economic impacts, as part of IA, play a central role in the IA process, as they provide information and evidence necessary for achieving quality normative acts. This process tracks and measures the economic effects of public interventions, such as changes in employment, income, investments, and competitiveness. The goal is to provide an assessment of both the anticipated and unforeseen economic impacts and optimize costs in the lawmaking process. This also includes the management of resources and expenses associated with the drafting of normative acts, while considering the balance between costs and benefits for the interested parties.

3. Framework and Content of the Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts in Bulgaria. Types of IA

The legal frameworks governing the legislative and executive powers in Bulgaria are set by the Constitution and are further developed and detailed in the "law of laws" – the Law on Normative Legal Acts (LNLA). The LNLA provides the main mechanisms for regulating the lawmaking process. The draft amendments to the LNLA were discussed and finally adopted on 20.04.2016, with the changes related to the IA mechanism being published in the State Gazette № 34 on 03.05.2016 and entering into force on 04.11.2016.

The legal framework for the IA mechanism, although it has undergone some changes, remains quite general and underdeveloped, sometimes giving the impression of a lack of completeness, integrity, and security regarding the tool and the process of drafting normative acts. The LNLA establishes duality in the regulation of the methodology for conducting impact assessment. A notable exception is the legal framework of the Regulation on the Scope and Methodology for Conducting Impact Assessment.

In the official guide for preliminary impact assessment, which has been in effect since 2019, the economic impact of normative acts is addressed more comprehensively. However, the economic sphere of impact is extensive, particularly because the economy encompasses a wide range of methods and techniques. Thus, in addition to developing the methodological aspects of different types of IA and the need for an integrated assessment, there should also be an emphasis on deepening knowledge of the various impacts, such as the economic one.

The legal framework for IANLA in Bulgaria distinguishes two main types: **preliminary (ex ante)** and **subsequent (ex post)**. **Preliminary RIA** is carried out in the early stages of the lawmaking process and aims to gather, analyze, and assess the potential impacts of proposed normative acts. It focuses on forecasting the effects of regulation and selecting the most appropriate alternatives for addressing a particular issue. **Subsequent RIA**, on the

other hand, is carried out after the implementation of normative acts and aims to verify whether they have achieved the intended goals. Subsequent RIA is crucial for analyzing the effectiveness of existing legislation, as it examines the relationship between the established objectives and the achieved results.

4. Principles, Criteria, and Indicators of IANLA

The aim is to present the main provisions and patterns shaped by accumulated experience in the principles of the legislative process and the process of performing IA within the EU framework and, from there, in Bulgaria. This is important because the principles and criteria for conducting IA are in place, but according to available data, the degree of their adoption and implementation is unsatisfactory. The understanding that these are "reference points" (fundamental conditions) that should be clearly understood, followed, and respected to achieve effectiveness in processes and reach the goals is a necessity. The principles adopted in legislation and the IA process can be viewed as a kind of compass for the legislator, guiding them in certain areas of social regulation.⁷

Once we have a base to build on, we can focus on recognizing the ways to determine these processes, i.e., the indicators based on which we can deepen and assess the activities and their outcomes. This, in turn, enables us to track various data and make judgments about the development of the respective mechanism and the impact it has.

Using a careful approach towards the principles, criteria, and indicators in the IANLA process, their awareness, and a positive attitude towards them are a significant aspect of the whole process and the right path toward improving its quality.

5. Procedural Stages and Analytical Steps of Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts

It has become an important practical principle that IA starts at the earliest possible stage of the policy formulation cycle, following specific procedural stages, when the idea of intervention through public policy or legal norms is in its infancy. The assessment of economic impact is an important and integral part of integrated IA. As such, it undoubtedly follows the same procedural stages and analytical steps of this unique administrative

⁷ Stoilov, Ya. *Legal Principles: Theory and Application*. Sofia: Sibi, 2018, p. 34.

procedure, but it is directed towards identifying, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the effects of the application of normative acts in an economic context.

6. Problematic Areas and Criticisms in the Application of Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts

Impact assessment as a tool in the legislative process is accompanied by numerous issues and challenges, which lead to differences in its practical application, but the benefits of its use, outweigh the negatives. In Bulgaria, as in many other countries, IA is not always integrated into the legislative process in a way that leads to optimal public outcomes. Problems identified in various reports show serious gaps at all stages of the process — from defining the impacts to applying scientific expertise and conducting public consultations. The issue is not only technical but also conceptual, related to the lack of a critical approach and a clear vision of how IA should function. Without active engagement from the competent authorities, IA remains more of a wishful thinking than an effective tool.

To achieve real progress in the IA process, it is necessary to develop clear legal frameworks that cover all stages of the assessment — from standardizing the methodology to creating control mechanisms.

CHAPTER THREE

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF NORMATIVE LEGAL ACTS

Chapter Three examines the practical aspects of Impact Assessment of Normative Legal Acts, particularly focusing on the evaluation of economic impact. It highlights various statistical data, related case law in Bulgaria, methods and techniques for applying the assessment, as well as best practices. The chapter provides an in-depth look at the application of principles of the legislative process, which also concern the impact assessment, through data from the National Center for Parliamentary Research at the National Assembly, IA reports from the Council of Ministers, Legal Barometer reports, and judicial practice.

Some of the most commonly used methods and techniques (primarily economic) for conducting IA are explored, along with their significance for the respective analysis. The chapter presents various best practices and analyzes statistical data from the World Bank and other global organizations related to regulatory quality, the effectiveness of public

governance, and business development. These data provide numerical support for some of the conclusions drawn in the research.

1. Practical Application of IANLA Principles in Republic of Bulgaria

Possibly due to the fact that the Impact Assessment tool is a relatively new phenomenon in Bulgaria's legislative, administrative, and academic environment, the quantity of sources that provide insights into its status, functionality, and development of its core components – as well as the mechanism as a whole – is insufficient. Nevertheless, data from the reports of the National Center for Parliamentary Research (NCPR), the Council of Ministers, and relevant case law can to some extent outline the actual state and functioning of the legislative process and IA, as well as the attitude of competent authorities toward it when viewed through the lens of its embedded principles.

Statistical data from NCPR research indicate that since the end of 2014, the majority of legislative initiatives and proposals originate from Members of Parliament rather than the Council of Ministers. Reports show that between late 2014 and February 2023, nearly 76% of submitted legislative proposals were initiated by Members of Parliament, while just over 24% were from the Council of Ministers.⁸ According to data from the *Legal Barometer* magazine for the period from July 2016 to June 2023, 1,438 legislative proposals were introduced by both Parliament and the Council of Ministers, with approximately 66% submitted by Parliament and about 34% by the Council of Ministers.

The same source indicates that during this period, 573 laws were adopted, representing an average of about 47% of the total number of submitted proposals. A larger proportion of these (27%) were proposed by the Council of Ministers, while 20% were proposed by Members of Parliament. On average, about 10 laws per month were published in the State Gazette during the period.

The reports from NCPR, as well as those from *Legal Barometer*, confirm the existence of numerous issues in the legislative activity of the National Assembly (NA), particularly in conducting preliminary impact assessments. According to these reports⁹, the presented preliminary assessments do not meet the quality standards required for such evaluations and are deemed non-compliant with the Law on Normative Legal Acts.

⁸ Portal for Public Consultations of the Council of Ministers:

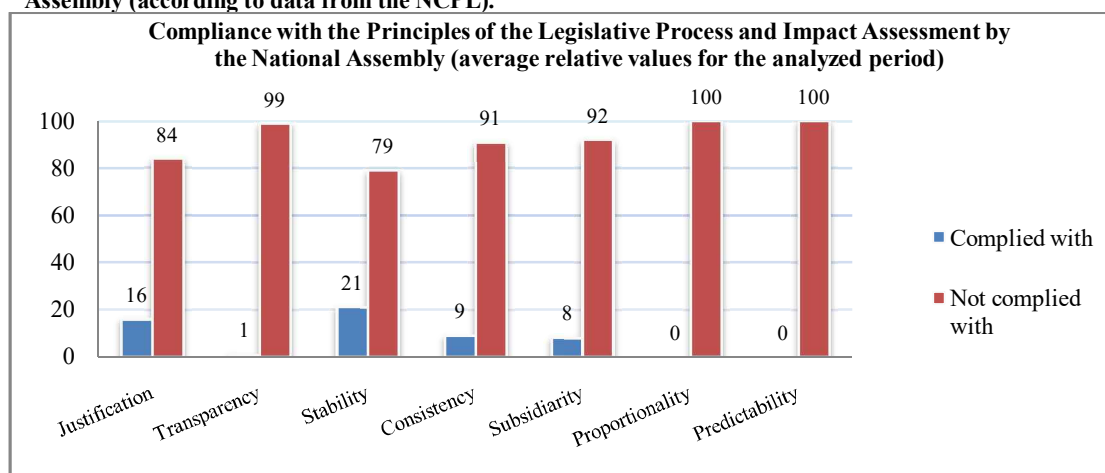
<https://www.strategy.bg/Publications/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&categoryId=&Id=301&y=&m=&d>

⁹ Website of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, National Center for Parliamentary Research: <https://www.parliament.bg/bg/ncpi>.

Primary data from NCPR, gathered through questionnaires aligned with the principles of the process, reveal violations of fundamental principles in the creation of normative acts, such as: *Justification, Transparency, Consistency, Stability, Predictability, Proportionality, Subsidiarity*.

To facilitate understanding, we will present a graphical depiction of the average compliance rates by the NA with the principles outlined in the NCPR reports for the period from late 2016 to February 2023. The principle of **necessity** will be excluded, as NCPR research shows that it is generally adhered to. Specifically, in over 95% of cases, the proponents of legislative proposals in the NA provide reasons to justify the need for the proposed legislative intervention.

Figure 1. Compliance with the Principles of the Legislative Process and Impact Assessment by the National Assembly (according to data from the NCPL).



A possible and important source of information relevant to the issue, which we should briefly address, is the case law in Bulgaria related to the instrument of preliminary IANLA. The limited but relevant case law shows that the instrument of IA is weakly addressed, yet it is still acknowledged and reflected in the legal environment, with the hope that the issue will continue to develop. For instance, in Decision No. 1 of 04.02.2020, in case No. 17/2018 of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bulgaria, half of the constitutional judges who consider the request well-founded believe that the multi-layered constitutional concept of "rule of law" implicitly includes the requirement for the law, as its foundation, to always be reasonable and just. They emphasize the existence of an imperative tool in the legal environment to achieve this requirement in legislation – the preliminary IA and public consultations regulated in Article 18a of the Law on Normative Legal Acts. According to

these judges, the preliminary IA mechanism should meet the need for reasonableness and justice in the law.

A brief review of relevant decisions of the Supreme Administrative Court shows a consistent and non-contradictory practice regarding preliminary impact assessments and public consultations. In decisions concerning disputes over subordinate normative acts issued by the relevant competent authorities, the mandatory and important cumulative requirement of Article 18a of the Law on Normative Legal Acts and the subsequent procedural rules related to the adoption of subordinate regulatory acts, and in particular with the preliminary impact assessment, is unequivocally recognized. The Supreme Administrative Court consistently rules that failure to comply with the requirements of Articles 26-28 of the Law on Normative Legal Acts in the procedure for adopting subordinate normative acts constitutes a significant violation of the rules and leads to the illegality of the adopted act. Article 26, paragraph 1 of the Law on Normative Legal Acts contains imperative requirements aimed at ensuring fundamental principles in the drafting of normative acts, such as necessity, reasonableness, predictability, transparency, coordination, subsidiarity, proportionality, and stability.

2. Methods and Techniques of Impact Assessment

For the purposes of the research, a more detailed examination is conducted of some of the most fundamental methods, primarily quantitative, with few exceptions related to the preliminary assessment. These methods carry an economic "charge" in themselves, allowing us to explore their significance and potential in the process of impact analysis and option selection. It should be noted that there are elements that act as unifiers and can be found to varying degrees in different methods and the entire methodology of impact analysis. These include the costs and benefits (pros and cons) of a given policy or action and the various approaches to determining them.

The use of techniques such as the **Cost-Benefit Analysis** method allows us to structure, analyze, and prioritize different types of costs and benefits. The tools and indicators provided by the method, as well as the mathematical expression of values and their ratios, are invaluable aids in making informed, evidence-based decisions. They synthesize financial, time, and other factors, and working with them helps compare various options and select the optimal one, depending on which ratio realizes the highest positive value. This information also aids in resource optimization and achieving the set objectives. Not coincidentally, this method is one of the most commonly used in analyses accompanying the regulatory impact assessment process.

The **Cost-Effectiveness Analysis** is a method for evaluating draft normative acts according to the benefits generated from spending one unit of currency (e.g., 1 leva) for each unit of benefit. This method is closely related to the **Cost-Benefit Analysis** but differs primarily in the way of measurement. In this analysis, the chosen project is the one where the expected goal is reached with the minimum possible costs.

Over the past decade, the focus of EU policymakers has expanded to encompass, on one hand, the risks and uncertain conditions, and on the other, the technological advancements and their associated impacts on various social systems. Policymakers acknowledge the interconnectivity between these phenomena and recognize that technologies are playing an increasingly important role in carrying out activities and meeting human needs. On a third front, the efforts of the EU and member states are directed toward achieving sustainability and improving the quality of life for European citizens and economic actors. Given these circumstances, it is necessary to seek synergy with developing digital technologies and innovations.¹⁰ In the context of Impact Assessment, the tools, consultations, and information gathered during evaluations related to digital transformation in policy and regulation lead us to the significant impacts associated with digitalization and the digital economy.

3. Good Practices

What do the numbers show us? The historical imposition and official adoption of the Impact Assessment tool highlight its significance as a supporting mechanism in making political decisions related to regulations. According to the latest data from the World Bank, 32 out of 35 OECD member states include IA in their regulatory frameworks. The bank's data indicates that, of the 186 countries studied for their regulatory governance, 86 conduct impact assessments of regulatory proposals. In 54 of these 86 countries, a specialized government agency is responsible for conducting, reviewing, and providing comments on the quality of IA.

The World Bank emphasizes that good public sector governance is crucial for economic growth and social stability. To this end, it collects and publishes data that evaluate the quality of governance and institutional reforms in over 200 countries and territories. These data, including annual reports on the ease of doing business, help analyze regulations and their impact on economic development. The World Bank uses six key indicators to assess

¹⁰ Official EU Portal for Legislation: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/BG/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0118>.

public governance, including voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.

Even without conducting an in-depth statistical analysis, certain trends can be traced from the data. For instance, from the World Bank's database related to public governance indicators, we take data for the past 7 years (from 2016 to 2022, as the IA mechanism started in Bulgaria at the end of 2016). We focus on three indicators that we believe are closely related to the IA mechanism: government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and the rule of law. We use available data for Bulgaria, Estonia, Poland, Denmark, Finland, Canada, and Romania. We then link these data to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index.¹¹

Table 1: World Bank Indicators on Public Governance: Rule of Law

Rule of Law	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
Country	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Bulgaria	-0,14	49,52	-0,12	50,95	-0,11	50,95	-0,04	52,38	-0,13	49,05	-0,07	52,38	-0,11	49,53
Canada	1,80	96,67	1,76	96,19	1,72	94,76	1,72	94,76	1,62	93,33	1,59	91,90	1,57	92,92
Denmark	1,88	97,62	1,80	97,62	1,77	96,67	1,83	97,14	1,81	98,10	1,90	99,05	1,90	99,53
Estonia	1,19	85,71	1,25	85,71	1,20	85,71	1,24	86,19	1,34	88,57	1,39	88,10	1,43	89,62
Finland	2,01	100,00	2,02	100,00	2,03	100,00	2,01	100,00	2,02	100,00	2,01	100,00	1,96	100,00
Poland	0,59	71,43	0,40	64,29	0,38	63,81	0,39	63,33	0,52	67,62	0,43	64,29	0,43	64,15
Romania	0,45	67,14	0,44	67,14	0,37	63,33	0,42	63,81	0,37	62,86	0,38	62,38	0,40	62,26

From a quick overview of the World Bank data, we can extract the following information. It is evident that the first indicator, "rule of law," for Bulgaria shows low negative values that are close to zero but still negative throughout the entire period. The average value for the period is -0.10, indicating that the quality of public governance in the country is generally unsatisfactory and there is relatively low trust among the recipients of legal norms regarding the functioning and effectiveness of the legal framework in Bulgaria. These values place us near the middle of the sample of countries reviewed by the World Bank. In contrast, for example, Finland achieves an average value of +2.01 for the reviewed period, indicating that the Finnish people are satisfied and have trust in the public institutions and legal order in their country. For Romania, this value is positive and equals +0.41 on average for the period, showing some positive inclination among recipients, but it remains insufficient.

¹¹ World Bank, Indicators: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators> and World Bank, Impact Assessment: <https://rulemaking.worldbank.org/en/ria-documents>.

As for the Ease of Doing Business index, the data shows a similar picture. Although the World Bank database lacks information for this index after 2019, we can see that for the period from 2016 to 2019, Bulgaria had a rank of 72, which is above average and positive in itself. However, in Romania and especially in Finland, the regulatory environment for doing business is better.

Table 2: World Bank Indicators for Public Governance: Quality of Regulations

Quality of Regulations	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
Country	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Bulgaria	0,70	74,29	0,66	73,33	0,61	72,38	0,53	70,48	0,46	65,71	0,43	66,67	0,32	61,79
Canada	1,73	94,29	1,88	97,62	1,70	94,29	1,71	95,71	1,59	94,29	1,61	94,29	1,68	95,75
Denmark	1,56	92,38	1,61	92,38	1,63	93,81	1,55	92,38	1,79	97,62	1,80	97,62	1,84	98,58
Estonia	1,69	93,33	1,63	93,33	1,54	91,90	1,58	92,86	1,53	92,86	1,55	92,86	1,56	92,92
Finland	1,81	96,19	1,81	96,67	1,78	96,19	1,84	97,62	1,85	99,05	1,89	99,05	1,78	97,17
Poland	0,91	79,52	0,80	76,19	0,87	78,57	1,01	80,48	0,85	76,19	0,83	75,71	0,72	74,53
Romania	0,57	69,05	0,43	68,57	0,41	67,14	0,44	66,19	0,35	62,86	0,29	61,90	0,36	63,68

According to the data, the indicator "quality of the regulatory framework (regulations)" shows a worrying trend, as it experiences a constant decline in its values over the reviewed period. In 2016, it was 0.7, while in 2022 it decreased to 0.32, which is more than a twofold deterioration. An interesting fact is that at the end of 2016, a reform in the legislative process was carried out in our country, which was supposed to improve the quality of the regulatory framework. The numbers indicate the exact opposite, and public perceptions of the government's ability to formulate and implement effective policies and regulations are increasingly diminishing. This, in itself, should be a worrying signal for the government. A similar trend is observed for the indicator "government effectiveness," where a negative trend is noted. In 2016, the value of the indicator was +0.09, but by 2022, it had already dropped to -0.27, which reflects the public's assessment of the administration's performance and trust in it. These data are important and show that the adopted regulatory changes have not contributed to improving the quality of the legislative process!

Table 3: World Bank Indicators for Public Governance: Government Effectiveness

Government Effectiveness	2016	2016	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022
Country	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Bulgaria	0,09	56,19	0,10	57,14	0,11	57,14	0,17	60,00	-0,21	43,81	-0,17	45,71	-0,27	42,92
Canada	1,75	94,76	1,82	96,67	1,68	94,76	1,70	95,71	1,60	93,33	1,56	94,29	1,57	94,34
Denmark	1,82	98,10	1,75	95,71	1,81	96,67	1,87	98,57	1,84	97,62	1,96	98,57	1,99	98,58
Estonia	1,06	81,90	1,07	82,86	1,15	83,33	1,14	84,76	1,30	87,62	1,35	88,57	1,34	89,62
Finland	1,84	99,05	1,98	99,05	2,01	99,52	1,97	99,52	1,90	98,57	1,92	98,10	1,76	96,70
Poland	0,65	72,38	0,55	71,90	0,55	71,90	0,51	70,48	0,32	64,29	0,25	61,43	0,26	61,79

Romania	-0,07	49,52	-0,08	49,05	-0,18	46,67	-0,22	42,86	-0,29	41,43	-0,16	46,19	0,00	53,30
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Although the rank here remains around the middle of the values, this should not reassure us due to the following circumstances. First, the described observations cover 142 countries worldwide, and the data shows that within the EU, Bulgaria, along with Romania, is at the bottom of the rankings for these indicators. Second, the low values of the indicators indicate unsatisfactory results and inefficiency in activities and processes. Third, there is a tendency for a decline in the values of the indicators, which should intensify the critical attitude in this direction. This shows that principles of good governance, the rules of the legislative process, as well as the principles of the rule of law and the supremacy of law are not being respected, as the already “fragile” state of the legal framework is deteriorating.

One opportunity for improving the problematic area is the study of good practices worldwide, which have proven successful over time and deliver positive results in the field of impact assessment and quality legislative drafting. These can also serve as objective arguments, providing initial strength and confidence that the challenging task of gradually creating a high-quality legislative process and the subsequent product is subject to modeling and positive development.

Good examples of reducing regulatory burden can be seen in the efforts of the European Commission and other countries such as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States, where results show significant savings and better regulation. Despite efforts to improve control and coordination, systematic monitoring and subsequent evaluations of enacted regulations remain underdeveloped in many member states, which hinders the optimization of processes for creating effective regulations.

The best practices presented in the study include various approaches to engaging stakeholders and improving the regulation process. Examples include platforms like the Slovak Slov-lex.sk and the Finnish "Say Your Word", which provide opportunities for public participation in the early stages of legislative drafting. A good practice is also the "one in – one out" approach, applied by countries such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, which involves compensating new regulations by removing or simplifying existing legislation. Involving stakeholders in the subsequent evaluation of legislation also proves to be effective, as shown by the Danish Business Forum for Better Regulation, which actively works to reduce the regulatory burden, among many others.

CONCLUSION

In the concluding part of this dissertation, based on the subject of the research and the tasks set, the main findings from the content of the work are briefly summarized, which will also propose a path toward initiating future discussions.

First, the thorough review of the development of impact assessment over the years revealed its economic roots and characteristics. The increasing application of this tool in various countries confirms its significance and potential to improve the efficiency and transparency of the creation and implementation of regulations.

Second, IA, particularly economic impact assessment, is a complex and multi-layered concept with different aspects and characteristics. The concept has two main dimensions – legal and non-legal. The legal part emphasizes the normativity, which is key to uncovering the legal meaning, content, and force of the rules governing the described processes. This normativity ensures certainty, predictability, obligation, and balance in the creation of legal acts, positively impacting the quality and effectiveness of legislative drafting and the legal system as a whole.

Third, in addition to the legal part, the mechanism of IA also contains a non-legal component that interacts at various levels. Within the EU, the non-legal part predominates, leading to conflicting results from the application of IA. The challenges in this regard are related to finding an effective balance between the two parts, taking into account the dynamics of public relations and the legal system.

Fourth, IA, as part of the legislative process, is also used to regulate the behavior of competent authorities in the process of creating legal norms. It serves as an evaluative criterion for the legal norms, initially during their design, and later performs its functions once the law is in effect, as an assessment of the social effects of the application of the legal norms. Therefore, the effective use of IA in the legislative process leads to qualitative changes not only in the functioning of the process itself but also to quantitative and qualitative changes in the normative content, i.e., to the improvement of the legal system. This confirms the existence of a connection between the impact assessment mechanism, legislative drafting, and the legal system.

Fifth, the multi-layered and complex nature of the tool implies the use of diverse methodological and theoretical approaches. The main approaches used here are the legal-sociological and normative approaches. These approaches, combined with the concept of measurability and effectiveness of IA, reveal intersections with law, economics, politics, and

social patterns. In the context of law as a public regulator, IA is perceived as a supporting tool that operates in the legal reality. From this perspective, it can be said that the normative and sociological aspects combine, emphasizing not only the importance of the quality of legal norms but also their social significance, with the sociology of law providing the necessary methodological foundation for their examination and application in practice.

Sixth, the principles for drafting regulatory acts form the basis of the IA mechanism and determine key provisions for its functioning. As guiding principles, they serve as a corrective and guarantee of reasonable and measured behavior in the process of creating and controlling regulatory acts. They create standards for work and lead to the improvement and development of the system. Their normative nature underscores their essential role in ensuring order and quality in the legislative process. Using a conscious and thorough approach to them, as well as applying appropriate methods for data collection and analysis, are crucial for the objectivity and justification of the results in the IA process, consequently improving the quality of legislative drafting.

Seventh, the economic aspects of the mechanism are crucial for the integrated process of impact assessment. The economic impact of the tool is twofold and can be viewed as a mechanism for integrating economic methods and techniques into law. The internal impacts related to the economic properties of IA and the legislative process are linked to the so-called "economics of lawmaking," which examines the effectiveness and economic viability of the process itself. On the other hand, it is important to consider the level of costs, negative effects, and benefits when implementing rights and legal obligations in conditions of uncertainty. The positions of the OECD and the EU regarding the use of the IA tool for economic regulation purposes are firm and consistent, confirming that regulatory instruments benefit quality lawmaking.

Eighth, the problem areas and challenges faced by the economic impact assessment tool, and by extension the legislative process, are numerous and have been thoroughly described in the study. They can be conditionally divided into legal and non-legal issues. Overall, IA is often carried out in a rather formal manner, without effective forecasting, accounting for results, or alignment with the principles and criteria of both the legislative process and the assessment itself. These are significant issues for the development of the legal system and the quality of the legislative process. Creating a consistent legal framework with mechanisms for dispute resolution and legal consequences for non-compliance with these principles is crucial for enhancing legal certainty.

Ninth, there is a need for greater clarity, a more in-depth understanding, and standardization of the legislative framework, concepts, procedures, principles, criteria, etc., of the legislative process and the process of economic impact assessment (EIA). In this sense, it is important, *de lege ferenda*, to regulate at the legal level the legal requirements for the uniform application and approach to EIA by the legislator; to establish rules related to the content requirements of EIA, ensuring that it is not carried out merely formally; to introduce rules regarding legal responsibility and consequences in case of non-compliance or violations of the provisions for conducting EIA, such as amendments to the Law on Normative Legal Acts, the Decree for applying the Law on Normative Legal Acts, and The Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly.

It is essential to find an optimal balance in the legal framework between, on the one hand, the many issues, principles, and concepts of the tool and, on the other hand, the clarity and understanding of its idea and methods. As a result, the legal framework of the tool may be either expanded or reduced accordingly. General or category-specific guidelines and manuals for conducting EIA, categorized by areas (economics, social, environment), can be developed.

It would be highly beneficial to establish and legally regulate an authority responsible for supervising and controlling these activities, as well as increasing the public accessibility and transparency of the process. Coordination and cooperation between experts, researchers, businesses, and the administration are necessary. Scientific research and theory in this field need to be developed and deepened. Training of specialists and the creation of specialized units within competent institutions are also required. In general, capacity and resources must be built in this area.

Tenth, according to the World Bank data and the indicator 'Quality of Regulatory Framework (Regulations)', a troubling trend emerges for Bulgaria. This, in itself, should be a concerning signal for the government. Similar information is obtained from the indicator 'Government Effectiveness,' where a negative trend is observed, indicating public evaluation of the administration's performance and the trust in it. These data are important and reinforce the view established in the study that the tool of impact assessment is more of a wishful thinking nature and does not contribute to improving the quality of the legislative process. This, of course, does not diminish its theoretical and practical potential and benefits.

As established, regulatory impact assessment is not only a theoretical but also an important practical tool for improving the quality of law and the legislative process. If used effectively, it can provide significant benefits in decision-making and in evaluating the impact of regulations on the economic and social environment. Unfortunately, experience shows that

its manifestations are purely formal and wishful. This is crucial to resolve due to the changing conditions we live in, so science must provoke debate on the essence, possibilities, and actual results of this critical legislative tool.

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