

OPINION

by Dr. Neli Georgieva Radeva,

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on a dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree “**doctor**”

in: Field of Higher Education 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”,

professional field 3.6. “Law”,

doctoral programme “Constitutional Law”

Author: Vasil Georgiev Iliev

Title: “Fundamental Obligations of Citizens in the Bulgarian Constitutions”

Scientific Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Paunov

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral candidate

By Order No. RD-22-2395 of 26 November 2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski (PU), I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury established to conduct the procedure for the defence of the dissertation entitled “Fundamental Obligations of Citizens in the Bulgarian Constitutions” for the award of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in Field of Higher Education 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”, Professional Field 3.6. “Law”, Doctoral Programme “Constitutional Law”. The author of the dissertation is Vasil Georgiev Iliev – a full-time doctoral candidate at the Department of Public Law Sciences, under the scientific supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Yordanov Paunov, Faculty of Law, PU “Paisii Hilendarski”.

The set of materials submitted in hard copy complies with Art. 36(1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU and includes the following documents:

- application to the Rector of PU for initiation of the defence procedure;
- curriculum vitae in European format;
- minutes of the departmental council concerning the reporting of readiness to open the procedure and the preliminary discussion of the dissertation;
- dissertation;
- abstract in Bulgarian;
- abstract in English;
- list of scientific publications related to the topic;
- copies of the publications;

- declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents;
- declaration of results and contributions.

The doctoral candidate has submitted a total of three publications related to the topic of the dissertation.

Vasil Georgiev Iliev was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in the Doctoral Programme Constitutional Law (Professional Field 3.6. Law, Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences) by Order No. RD-21-263 of 10 February 2023 of the Rector of PU, effective as of 1 March 2023. His scientific supervisor is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Paunov.

2. Relevance of the topic

The dissertation constitutes an in-depth and innovative study devoted to the fundamental obligations of citizens and their development within Bulgarian constitutionalism, which determines its scientific significance. The relevance of the research stems primarily from the fact that contemporary legal doctrine predominantly focuses on fundamental rights and freedoms, whereas citizens' obligations remain comparatively less examined.

The author convincingly advances the thesis that the stability of the constitutional order cannot be understood solely through the prism of subjective rights, but also presupposes consideration of the corresponding fundamental obligations that ensure the functioning of the state and society. In this sense, the work fills a substantial gap in Bulgarian legal scholarship, as after the classical monograph of Prof. Velko Valkanov no comprehensive and in-depth monographic study devoted to this matter has been produced.

The relevance of the study is further manifested in the candidate's objective to fill precisely this gap through a systematic analysis of the fundamental obligations of citizens in the Tarnovo Constitution, the Constitutions of the People's Republic of Bulgaria of 1947 and 1971, and the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria of 1991, as well as through an examination of their theoretical foundations, historical development, and terminological content.

3. Knowledge of the problem

The doctoral candidate demonstrates thorough knowledge of the issues related to the fundamental obligations of citizens, both in their historical development and in their contemporary constitutional-law dimension. The dissertation analyses the principal theoretical positions in the doctrine, traces the evolution of obligations from the first written constitutions to the current Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, and examines relevant scholarly works and constitutional models.

The candidate shows the ability to identify existing gaps and contradictions in the doctrine, to systematize them, and to propose well-reasoned solutions, which evidences a mature research approach and a high level of theoretical preparation. The literature has been used and cited correctly. The structure of the work is logically coherent.

4. Research methodology

The main research methods applied are the historical method, the comparative-law method, and methods of legal interpretation. These ensure a comprehensive and in-depth study of the fundamental obligations of citizens in their development and contemporary constitutional manifestation. The applied interpretative techniques allow for a multi-layered analysis of the issues.

5. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and its contributions

The dissertation is logically consistent and well structured. It comprises 241 pages and consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and an extensive bibliography.

The first chapter has a fundamental character and serves as the theoretical foundation of the research. In this chapter, the author demonstrates the ability to work with various scholarly concepts, to compare them, and to interpret them critically, thereby formulating his own understanding of the nature and characteristics of the fundamental obligations of citizens. He develops an in-depth legal-historical analysis of the idea of legal obligations—from Antiquity to the first written constitutions in Europe. This part goes beyond a descriptive approach and demonstrates the capacity for theoretical generalization.

A notable merit of the chapter is the clear terminological distinction between “fundamental obligation,” “juridical obligation”, “legal duty,” and “subjective obligation.” The candidate convincingly argues that fundamental obligations constitute an autonomous constitutional-law category, distinct from ordinary legal obligations as well as from moral duties.

The second chapter has a clearly defined historical-constitutional character and systematically examines the regulation of fundamental obligations in three key stages of Bulgarian constitutionalism. The author systematically examines the regulation of the fundamental obligations of citizens across three key stages in the development of Bulgarian constitutionalism, skillfully combining the analysis of normative texts with consideration of their historical and political context. The chapter also reveals the author’s ability to work with primary normative sources and historical materials. A detailed and systematic commentary is provided on the fundamental obligations under the Tarnovo Constitution and under the two socialist constitutions of 1947 and 1971. It should be noted that, with regard to some of the fundamental obligations discussed in this chapter, the doctoral candidate has also conducted a comparative-law analysis

with provisions found in other European constitutions of the period. The candidate does not confine himself to a merely formal interpretation of the texts, but situates them within the historical, political, and ideological environment of the respective period, which lends additional depth to the research.

The third chapter focuses on the current constitutional framework and has a pronounced practical significance. The author analyses both the constitutional drafts and the debates in the Seventh Grand National Assembly of Bulgaria, as well as the final text of the Constitution, which makes it possible to reveal the actual intent of the constituent power. A substantial merit of the chapter lies in the linkage established between the individual fundamental obligations and the case-law of the Constitutional Court, as well as the relevant legislation. This enables the author of the dissertation to formulate well-reasoned conclusions regarding the contemporary content and place of the fundamental obligations within the constitutional system and to put forward proposals *de lege ferenda*.

The chapter is distinguished by a high degree of analytical depth, topical relevance, and practical orientation. It logically concludes the study and demonstrates the candidate's ability to draw independent scientific conclusions.

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

The principal contribution of the dissertation lies in its comprehensive monographic character, as it constitutes an integral study of the fundamental obligations of citizens in the Bulgarian constitutions and fills a significant gap in legal doctrine.

Through a historical-legal and comparative-law approach, the evolution of these obligations and their function in ensuring the stability of the constitutional order are revealed. The study connects theoretical conclusions with the case-law of the Constitutional Court and the current legislation, thereby enhancing its practical relevance. Well-reasoned proposals *de lege ferenda* for the further development of the regulation of the fundamental obligations of citizens are formulated.

The publications submitted by the doctoral candidate within the procedure, similarly to the dissertation itself, are distinguished by their originality. The total number of publications related to the topic of the dissertation is three. These publications constitute evidence of the effective dissemination of the research results. The candidate's personal contribution to the publications is indisputable. Both the number and the quality of the publications meet the requirements set out in the Regulations on the terms and procedure for acquiring academic degrees and holding academic positions at PU, and their content reflects the principal results of the research.

7. Abstract

The abstract, in terms of both its content and quality, has been prepared fully in accordance with the requirements of the applicable regulations and complies with the established standards. It accurately reflects the principal results achieved in the dissertation. The scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the study are correctly presented by the doctoral candidate.

8. Recommendations for the future use of the dissertation contributions and results

The merits and strengths of the submitted dissertation provide sufficient grounds for recommending that the doctoral candidate publish the dissertation. Such publication would be beneficial to researchers in the field of constitutional law.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific and scientific-applied results that constitute an original contribution to legal scholarship and comply with all statutory requirements set forth in the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the relevant regulations of Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski.

The dissertation entitled “Fundamental Obligations of Citizens in the Bulgarian Constitutions” demonstrates that the doctoral candidate, Vasil Georgiev Iliev, possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional competence in the academic field of Constitutional Law and exhibits the qualities and skills necessary for conducting independent scientific research.

For the foregoing reasons, I confidently express my POSITIVE ASSESSMENT of the research presented in the dissertation, the abstract, and the achieved results and contributions, and I respectfully propose that the esteemed scientific jury award the educational and scientific degree “doctor” to Vasil Georgiev Iliev in Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.6. Law, Doctoral Programme “Constitutional Law”.

01.02.2026

Prepared by:

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Neli Radeva)