

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Radoslava Yankulova,
Associate Professor of Constitutional Law at the Faculty of Law,
Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“,
Member of the Scientific Jury
on a dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree
„Doctor“
in Scientific Field: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,
Professional Field: 3.6. Law,
Doctoral Programme: Constitutional Law

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Faculty of Law, Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“
Dissertation topic: „Fundamental Obligations of Citizens in the Bulgarian
Constitutions“
Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Paunov

Dear Members of the Scientific Jury,

By Order No. RD-22-2395 of 26 November 2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“, I was appointed as an internal member of the Scientific Jury and, within the prescribed time limit, I hereby submit for your consideration the present opinion on the dissertation.

Vasil Iliev was admitted to a full-time doctoral programme by Order No. RD-21-263 of 10 February 2023 and successfully passed the doctoral minimum examinations. He completed the doctoral programme ahead of schedule and was granted the right to public defense by a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Law (Protocol No. 134/07.10.2025). His dissertation was discussed at a meeting of the Department of Public Law Sciences held on 13.11.2025. The Department proposed to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Law the initiation of a procedure for the public defense of the dissertation, which was approved by a positive decision.

During the period of his doctoral studies, Vasil Iliev carried out teaching, methodological and pedagogical activities, expressed in conducting seminar classes in the academic discipline Constitutional Law with first-year, full-time students enrolled in the Law programme at the Faculty of Law. His approach to the teaching process included the development of thematic case studies inspired by the

accumulated case law of the Constitutional Court, through which the studied material was assimilated by students in the context of specific constitutional-law problems.

Vasil Iliev has participated with papers (subsequently published) in several academic forums organized both by the Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” and by other faculties and research institutions. The dissertation under review represents a logical culmination of the efforts made by the doctoral candidate during the course of his doctoral training.

I. General description of the submitted dissertation

The dissertation has a total volume of 241 pages, comprising an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The work contains 479 footnotes, with sources duly cited. A Declaration of Originality by the author is attached, as well as documentation certifying compliance with the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for the field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences; professional field: 3.6. Law.

The abstract adequately reflects the content of the dissertation, and its contributions are correctly presented therein.

The author’s language is legally precise, clear, and logically consistent, which facilitates the reception of the work by a broad readership.

The relevance and dissertation-worthiness of the topic are beyond dispute. The topic has been insufficiently explored in contemporary Bulgarian constitutional law scholarship and has remained in the shadow of studies devoted to fundamental rights. For this reason, the author sets out to fill an existing gap in legal research. The significance of the selected topic is further justified by the fact that compliance with legal obligations of constitutional rank makes possible the functioning and maintenance of a constitutionally organized civil society. Placing the subject of the study in a retrospective historical context—particularly its examination through the prism of the regulation of fundamental obligations in the totalitarian Constitutions of 1947 and 1971—contributes to a meaningful understanding of the value-based transition brought about by the adoption and entry into force of the current Constitution of 1991.

The dissertation emphasizes normative analysis of the positive-law regulation of fundamental obligations, employing the established methods of interpretation—historical, comparative-law, and linguistic. The objectives set and the chosen research methodology presuppose an interdisciplinary approach, requiring in-depth knowledge of the theory and history of the state and law, as well as the general part of civil law. It is evident from the content examined that the doctoral candidate possesses and skillfully applies knowledge from each of these legal fields in developing his topic.

More specifically, the qualities of the work may be outlined as follows:

From a structural perspective, Chapter One, entitled “The Nature of the Fundamental Obligations of Citizens”, consists of five main sections, each further systematized through subsections. In this chapter, the author concisely yet purposefully presents the legal-historical environment from which the legal institution examined in the dissertation emerges. A contribution of this part of the exposition lies in enabling the current positive-law regulation of the fundamental obligations of citizens to be understood in the context of their historical genesis and evolution. The conceptual distinction drawn between the studied institution and related legal concepts (legal obligation, juridical obligation, legal duty, and subjective obligation) adds further cognitive value to the dissertation. Theoretical theses and positions familiar to legal doctrine are enriched by the author through the prism of his analytical reading. Another contribution in Chapter One is the effort to formulate a definition of “fundamental obligations of citizens.” The author’s proposed definition is built upon a solid doctrinal foundation, including the presentation of leading theories concerning the emergence of the institution under consideration and the construction of a typological classification of fundamental obligations of citizens. Given that fundamental obligations, as a type of juridical obligations, involve an imperative modality of conduct, an appropriate place in Chapter One is also devoted to the legal guarantees for their fulfillment.

Chapter Two of the dissertation is devoted to a retrospective presentation of the regulation of fundamental obligations of citizens in the Tarnovo Constitution of 1879 and in the Constitutions of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria of 1947 and 1971. The author’s formally legal approach to the analysis of positive-law regulation is accompanied by an exposition of the political and historical circumstances surrounding the creation of the respective constitutional frameworks, which adds further scholarly value to this part of the dissertation. The broad catalogue of fundamental obligations examined enables the author to conclude that “during the period of operation of the Constitutions of 1947 and 1971, characteristic of totalitarian political regimes, emphasis is placed on citizens’ obligations and on the necessity of the ‘unity of rights and obligations’”. Within this framework, an attempt is made to neutralize the attractive force of rights and freedoms through the sobering effect of obligations, which in practice serves to justify the strong and dominant position of the state vis-à-vis civil society.”

Chapter Three of the dissertation focuses on the regulation of the fundamental obligations of citizens in the current Constitution of 1991. The exposition is grounded on a broad empirical basis encompassing constitutional drafts and the debates within the Seventh Grand National Assembly. References to the verbatim records of the Seventh Grand National Assembly contribute to clarifying the intent of the members of parliament involved in the discussion and adoption of the positive-law regulation relevant to the dissertation topic. The positions synthesized by the author, expressed during the debates on the adoption of the current constitutional provisions relating to the fundamental obligations of citizens, have a contributory character for the process of their historical interpretation.

A further contribution lies in the analytical presentation of the case law of the Constitutional Court and of the courts within the judicial system on the subject of the dissertation. This part of the exposition could have been further strengthened had the

author undertaken additional research to highlight the key reasoning by which constitutional jurisdiction declares unconstitutional legislative solutions that link the non-exercise of constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights with sanctions characteristic of non-fulfillment of legal obligations. Analysis of this aspect of constitutional jurisprudence would have opened a horizon for developing the studied institution in the context of the doctrine of the inviolable core of fundamental rights.

In the concluding part of the dissertation, the main results of the research are comprehensively summarized, and corresponding *de lege ferenda* proposals are formulated.

II. Conclusion:

In view of the foregoing, including the identified specific contributions as well as the outlined potential for improvement, I give a positive evaluation of the dissertation "Fundamental Obligations of Citizens in the Bulgarian Constitutions." The doctoral candidate has presented a serious and in-depth study. The highlighted scientific and contributory results attest to the thorough knowledge, analytical precision, and capacity for independent research demonstrated by the doctoral candidate, Vasil Iliev.

The dissertation meets the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff and its Implementing Regulations, as well as the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff of Plovdiv University. Therefore, I propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Vasil Georgiev Iliev, full-time doctoral candidate at the Department of Public Law Sciences of the Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

Member of the Scientific Jury:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Radoslava Yankulova

Plovdiv, 12.01.2026