

STATEMENT

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Subject: Dissertation for awarding of scientific degree Doctor of Science-Political Science /Studies of European Integration/

Author Prof. Georgi Dimitrov Dimitrov

Title dissertation: "Empirical reconstruction of political interactions in the History of Bulgarian Integration into the European Union (Study on the Memories of Participants in the Process)"

Based on: participation in the scientific jury appointed by Order No. RD-38-193/12.04.2022 of the Rector of "St. Kliment Ohridski" University, Sofia

General characteristics of the dissertation

The proposed dissertation of Prof. Georgi Dimitrov Dimitrov on "An Empirical Reconstruction of Political Interactions in the History of Bulgarian Integration into the European Union (A Study on the Recollections of Participants in the Process)" is a successful attempt to present a generalized picture of polity understood as institutional order and arrangement; of politics understood as political activity and of policies understood as action, governance, through the study and analysis of the specificities of Bulgarian integration into the EU.

The dissertation consists a total of 827 pages, including 803 pages of main text, a bibliography of over 330 sources and documents in Bulgarian and English, two annexes, 25 illustrative figures and 16 tables with empirical data. The research text is arranged in ten main chapters, in which a conclusion participates, and after each chapter a conclusion is formed, which allows a smooth transition from defended theses to subsequent conceptual positions. The internal content is balanced, there is an internal logic, the structure is well arranged. The author introduces the research and conceptual framework of the study in the main

concepts and categories in the *first and second chapters*, clarifies the conceptual framework of the study, justifies the proposed approach and methodology of the study by carrying out a consideration of the European integration process as a political impact, offering an overview of different theories, traces the Eastern enlargement in the context of the democratization process of the member states after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As the author himself points out, "the object of the study is the relationship between the polity, politics and policies of Bulgaria's European integration determining the degrees and forms of Europeanization" /page 20/, the subject - "the mechanisms of EU integration as the embodiment of a characteristic political approach" /page 26/. The main "methodological framework is a programme of international comparative research on Europeanisation as realised through transformations in the CEE regional policy sector (Hughes, Sasse, and Gordon 2005)/p.26-28/, and at the heart of the methodology is empirical research and analysis that allows for a reconstruction of Bulgarian integration into the EU through the memories of 47 key actors. The author identifies and interprets 8638 individual meaning emphases in the group discourse. On the basis of summarizing an extraordinary amount of information gathered in the empirical research, the author presents, and throughout the proposed work, defends his thesis that "the EU's eastern enlargementstands out as a unique and astonishing historical process.... It transformed not only the post-communist societies applying for EU membership, but also the Union itself. in the course of its unfolding, it is itself qualitatively changing through a transformation - according to its own internal logic - of its political goals, objectives and instruments, as well as the pace of its implementation" /page 116/

In the *next chapters* of the work, the author discusses the logical beginning of the negotiation process, the reasons for EU integration, the current geopolitical situation in the context of Euro-Atlantic integration, the reactions and policies of individual member states, the role of the different institutions in the process, the Bulgarian political actors in the accession process. In the Conclusion, Georgi Dimitrov summarizes and assesses Bulgaria's integration into the EU, summarizes the lessons from the study of the EU integration process for future pre-accession integration processes of new member and candidate states.

Evaluation of scientific and applied results

I take the possibility to consider that the presented dissertation is distinguished by scientific and scientific-applied results and merits, which I would like to note, namely

First of all, the issues and themes under study are very topical at the moment, but will continue to be so for at least the next decade, and perhaps longer, with a view to using the lessons of the Eastern Enlargement, and in particular Bulgarian integration in the context of the enlargement of the Western Balkans, as well as any subsequent enlargement. A detailed study of the Bulgarian lesson from the enlargement process, the analysis of the role of different political actors in it, the rich palette and dynamics of national-European, geopolitical and situational analysis, would be useful reading in the overall process of Western Balkan accession for different types of audiences - researchers, party leaders, practitioners.

Secondly, the sociological and political science approach is clearly highlighted and excellently combined in the proposed work, as Georgi Dimitrov defends a rich methodological framework, which also saturates with enviable research material as a result of the conducted research. On the basis of interviews-memories of which also saturates with enviable research material as a result of the research conducted. On the basis of interviews-memories of participants in the process of Bulgaria's integration into the EU, the author manages to reconstruct and recreate the place, role and interactions of different political actors in the process of Bulgarian integration into the EU. I find the approach original and interesting, and the good selection and processing of information have led to interesting conclusions and results. I believe that such a study definitely enriches the available base of research on European integration by combining historical, memoir, political science, and sociological approaches.

Thirdly, the author gives a thorough overview of the historical periods and stages of Bulgarian integration, analyses with knowledge the role of the various actors in it, which allows him to make a serious political analysis and draw conclusions about the lessons from the ongoing processes. The study undoubtedly enriches both historical and political science knowledge, the literature on European integration and the processes related to the main policies pursued, bringing in the argumentation of empirical research, which allows to accept the author's shared view that this could be the basis of a potential historical bank.

Fourth, the study is clearly interdisciplinary in nature.

Fifth, the author has convincingly defended his thesis that Bulgarian accession is subject to its own specific logic. Explaining the "mismatch between the requirements of accession and the obligations of EU membership", the author argues that this specific policy towards Bulgaria is the explanation for its incomplete outcome.

Sixthly, the geopolitical side of Bulgaria's accession is examined and illuminated, the accession to NATO in the full understanding that the overall process is not only a prerequisite for successful Euro-Atlantic integration, but also a political achievement and a determinant of integration with the EU.

Evaluation of the abstract

The abstract offers a general description of the dissertation, its structure, presentation of the content of the individual chapters, the theoretical and methodological tasks and the results and conclusions reached. A summary of the main contributions is provided. I believe that the author's abstract fully and correctly presents the content and essence of the presented dissertation.

I have no critical remarks to the dissertation.

Conclusion

The presented dissertation fully complies with the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations for the Procedure for Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the Acquisition of the Degree of Doctor of Science. A fully completed research work has been proposed, in which there is a complex scientific-theoretical and scientific-practical research of a distinctly contributory character, the topic is significant, topical, a new research approach has been proposed, it has been presented professionally and competently.

I appreciate the presented dissertation " Empirical Reconstruction of Political Interactions in the History of Bulgarian Integration into the European Union (Study on the Memories of Participants in the Process)" by Georgi Dimitrov Dimitrov and I propose the members of the scientific jury to decide for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science in the professional field 3.3. Political Science.

30 June 2022

Veliko Tarnovo



/ Assoc. Prof. Teodora Kaleynska/