

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Veselina Toneva Zhekova, PhD, member of the scientific jury for the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor",
Scientific field: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional area: 3.3. Political Sciences (Public Administration)
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Philosophy, Department of "Public Administration",

Dissertation work on:

Horizontal policies in the Bulgarian context

author Vanya Antonova Ilieva

By **Order No. RD 38-25/16.01.2024** of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in the procedure of doctoral student Vanya Antonova Ilieva.

1. Information about the procedure, the dissertation and the abstract

Dissertation work on the topic "**Horizontal policies in the Bulgarian context**" with academic supervisor, Prof. Tatyana Tomova, Ph.D., was discussed and proposed for public defence at a meeting of the "Public Administration" Department on 18.12.2023.

The topic of the research is suitable for a dissertation, current and significant. The present importance of the topic stems not only from the need for research on horizontal policies in Bulgaria, but also from the significant negative trends in the field of demographic policy. The dissertation is dedicated to a complex and comprehensive clarification of the nature and dynamics in the development of public policies and is aimed at the search for more effective ways to deal with public problems. It can be defined as widely debated in scientific and civil terms, containing many challenges.

The dissertation is 220 pages long and includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, references and appendices. The text contains 12 tables and 16 graphics. The bibliography includes a total of 119 sources, of which: 85 scientific publications; 11 regulative acts and other acts of state bodies; 14 strategic and program documents; 9 internet portals and sites. 85 of the sources are in English and 34 in Bulgarian. There are 3 appendices.

The main objective of the dissertation is precisely and specifically formulated, it is presented clearly and synthesized, and three specific objectives are formulated for its implementation.

The object, the subject, the tasks and the research thesis are well connected and meet the scope and nature of the requirements for a dissertation study.

In general, the structure of the study can be defined as properly constructed, relatively balanced in terms of individual chapters and meeting the requirements for a dissertation work. The presentation, within the specified structure, is logically supported and corresponds to the object, subject, thesis, goal and research tasks formulated in the introduction.

The abstract is developed according to the legal requirements and reflects the structure and content of the dissertation. It emphasizes the most important moments and results of the research.

2. Evaluation of results and contributions in the dissertation work

➤ The dissertation work has the quality of a scientific product with specific research, conducted according to the author's methodology and based on a specific object.

➤ The problems and trends in the field of horizontal policies have been identified and theoretically clarified.

➤ Bulgarian practices in the formation and implementation of horizontal policies have been traced - factors of the process, main problems and relations.

➤ The approaches to the formulation and implementation of the demographic policy in Bulgaria are defined, the process and the forms of coordination between the participants in the policy are analysed.

➤ A model of adaptation of horizontal and sectoral policies to the demographic policy in Bulgaria during the period 2001-2020 has been identified.

➤ Options for improving the process of formulating and implementing policy objectives are proposed.

To fulfil the set goals and objectives, a mixed methodology was used, using methods of different scientific fields - office study, survey among 351 representatives of the central administration of the executive power, in-depth interview with 14 representatives of the state administration, non-governmental organizations and private research/consulting agencies.

The methods of content analysis, theory of change analysis, stakeholder analysis and comparative analysis were used to analyse the collected qualitative information.

Descriptive analysis, one-dimensional and two-dimensional distribution analysis, and secondary data analysis were applied to analyse the collected quantitative information.

The results of the study are accompanied by analytical evaluations, author's ideas, opinions and proposals. Theoretical and applied studies are adequately illustrated with graphic images (12 tables and 16 graphics).

I accept the contributions formulated by the doctoral student, which correctly reflect the obtained results.

3. Critical remarks and recommendations

I recommend the doctoral student to continue working on the issues related to demographic policy in the future. At the end of each chapter of the dissertation work, it is good to have conclusions that represent summaries and evaluations of the issues under consideration.

The above recommendations do not detract from the PhD student's achievements and do not affect my overall positive assessment of the dissertation.

5. Publications

On the subject of the dissertation work, eight publications in Bulgarian are listed (7 independent and 1 co-authored).

1. Ilieva, V., (2019). The Horizontal Approach of Goal Setting - Specifics and Results of the Demographic Policy in Bulgaria. Collection "30 Years of Public Administration Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe", Sofia, University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", ISBN 9789540748436, pp. 285-300

2. Ilieva, V., (2021), Theories and Ideas about Horizontality in Public Administration. Collection "Doctoral readings 2020", Sofia, University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", ISSN: 2603-3453, pp. 387-403

3. Ilieva, V., (2021). Dimensions of Generational Justice in the Demographic Policy of Bulgaria. Collection "Administrative Justice as an Element of Good Governance", Sofia, University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", ISBN 978-954-07-5251-8, pp. 315-332

4. Ilieva, V., (2023). Comparative analysis of coordination mechanisms for horizontal policies in Bulgaria. Collection "Doctoral readings 2021", Sofia, University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", ISSN 2603-3453, pp. 465-483

5. Ilieva, V., M. Vladimirov, (2022). The National Recovery and Resilience Plan: Deficits in the Formulation of Horizontal Policies. Collection "Public Administration after 2020: What do we Know When We Know Nothing?", Sofia, University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", ISBN 9789540754840, pp. 198-216

6. Ilieva, V., (2021). Mechanisms for Coordination of Horizontal Policies: Essence and Functions of the National Council on Demographic Policy. Collection "Space - Society - Economy", volume 3, Sofia, "Atlasi" Publishing House, ISBN 978-619-238-200-1, pp. 216-233

7. Ilieva, V., (2023). Advisory Councils as Tools for Coordination of Horizontal Policies - the example of Demographic policy in Bulgaria in the period 1995-2020. Collection "Public Administration in the Global Crisis: between Liberalism and Statism", Sofia, University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski", ISBN 9789540757322, pp. 413-428

8. Ilieva, V., Political Network of Demographic Policy in Bulgaria. Collection "Doctoral readings 2023", in press

6. Conclusion

The dissertation submitted for defence has the characteristics of a completed scientific study. The methods, the registered and processed data and the sequence of conducting the studies in the dissertation are precisely and accurately described. Skills for conducting independent research are available.

Author contributions are identified and distinguished precisely and specifically. They have an impact of enhancement of the existing theory, methodology and refer to the systematization of knowledge, formulation of assessments and recommendations in the context of the issue under consideration. The results, analysis and evaluations are laid out and presented in a comprehensible, logical, precise manner and are summarized appropriately.

The presented materials correspond to the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Implementation Regulations of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". The defence procedure has been correctly followed.

There are the necessary grounds to recommend to the members of the respected Scientific Jury to award **the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the Scientific field: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional area: 3.3. Political Science (Public Administration) to Vanya Antonova Ilieva.**

11.03.2024

City of Plovdiv

Opinion by:

(Assoc. Prof. Veselina Zhekova, PhD)