

ACADEMIC OPINION

for the defense of doctoral thesis
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
(CSR) IN THE MISSION, VISION AND PRACTICES OF
BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS
of Mr. **Plamen Stoilov Bobokov**

PhD student at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".
Department of Communication, Public Relations and Advertising
with supervisor Assoc. Prof. **Svetoslava Kovacheva**,

to acquire the educational and scientific degree Doctor
in the Professional field

3.5. Social communications and information sciences
(Media & Communications - Public Relations)

by Professor PhD. **Daniela Vassileva Sotirova**,
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member of a Scientific jury in accordance with Order No RD 03.11.2019
of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"

The dissertation submitted is 317 pages in length, of which 301 pages are the text of the doctoral thesis, structured in introduction, three chapters, conclusion and list of bibliography. The latter includes 270 sources, of which over 200 are in English and the rest in Bulgarian and Russian language, including some books and articles translated into these two languages. In addition 94 company, corporate, institutional, and regulatory documents (without authors) - both legal and ethical and administrative - were cited in the list of literature.

Such **demonstrated widespread** field knowledge and awareness is a necessary prerequisite condition to cover the chosen topic of the doctoral thesis. The author is well acquainted with the Bulgarian research on corporate social responsibility from the last 15 years. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has **solid traditions** in managerial, ethical, and socio-political research in the last decades. Needless to say, nowadays there are tens of industry, regional, national, European, and global forums and associations for responsible business and for business as power of good. This experience and social imperative needs to be investigated and fostered especially when it is conducted by someone with experience in managing real business.

The title of the voluminous text is focused on the mission, vision, and practices of business organizations. In this way the attention is being focused on their social face.

The author presents it in a communicative and philosophical-social-cultural aspect. I find such broad perspective suitable in rationalizing CSR. In the research and various approaches in the dissertation I would highlight the historical-social reading (the attention to the pre-history and the appearance of theories of welfare state, the focus on the meaning of Max Weber and “Protestant labor ethics and the spirit of Capitalism”). Moreover, the ethical perspective in analysis is being developed as well as the global vision in selection, structuring, justification, and following the “internal logic” of the topic and concepts. Thus the author really succeeds in accomplishing the chosen goal – to investigate CSR in the context of the philosophy of doing business, as declared on page 6 of the author's abstract of doctoral dissertation.

Certainly, in this **pragmatic procedural approach to CSR** the personal and organizational experience of Mr. Bobokov is being reflected. I find valuable and rarely seen in our country such reflection on the business organization managed by yourself. I would remind that in the behavioral sciences the use of biographical approaches, the problematizing of the personal experience as organizational have their place along with the classical approaches in investigating individuals, communities and cultures. Moreover, it is certain that the personal biographical experience would be a valuable source of self-development and self-actualization for everyone. Within the academic context of teaching business ethics and organizational culture the specific example also serves as an influential power. In this way, a step is being made towards the desired connection between education and business. Plamen Bobokov analyses CSR as a suitable and universally accepted instrument for connectedness between business and society. It makes an impression that this instrument is being revealed by the author in two aspects. Firstly, CSR is an applicable “technique” for the effectiveness improvement of the business organization itself. This is a mechanism for the creation of a better and sustainable working environment. Secondly, CSR is a strategic means for the formation of reputational capital, helping to minimize the effects of crisis situations.

The structure of the dissertation presents in full and consecutively the ideas of the author. In chapter one the PhD student attempts and succeeds to a high degree to present and systemize the huge volume of texts and approaches to CSR. He offers also his own definition of CSR. The important second chapter tracks the changes in the concepts – how from a strategic mechanism CSR transforms into a factor for improvement of the social environment, inclusive of several concerned stakeholders.

The language of the doctoral work is accessible and clear; the written text demonstrates understanding of the entire problematic of someone coming from the business world. The conclusions are formulated on the basis of arguments from the

literature and summary of corporate experience. The internal logic, the deliberate outline of theoretical parameters of the critical problem in each chapter and its interpretation in the dissertation are signs of a well conducted research, in which the trivialization of the topic of CSR is avoided.

The author's abstract of doctoral dissertation of 40 pages offers summary of the basic topics of investigation.

I would support my **overall positive impressions** with the fact that in the text stimulating ideas are found and latest models and data on applied CSR policies nowadays are described. For example, Mr. Bobokov rightly points out the so-called „ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance)“ with cited information from the year 2018 – an instrument that offers assessment of public benefits of business or the so-called “sustainable investment”.

An interesting topic which the PhD student could further clarify during his defense would be the one on “corporate purpose as evolutionary form of CSR”.

The exposition of Bobokov is useful both for academic teaching and research in the broad spectrum of relations business-society, as well as for practitioners from the real business, who deal with communication strategies, HR management and PR. The detailed cases in a broad historical and geographical plan – from Bulgaria to Liberia, are stimulating for teachers in business ethics, organizational culture and strategic management.

My remarks on the present work are minor, rather linguistic and formal. The text would gain if it weren't so fragmented – uneven in paragraphs and subparagraphs (for example, in chapter one there are 7 paragraphs, 5-6 of which are gathered as subquestions on a particular problem, while some of the seven paragraphs are considered “in bulk”. Certain expressions need more precision – for example, the discussed “popularization of moral” in the context of escaping the “sin industries” on behalf of businesses (page 48 of the dissertation). At certain places the text follows inadequately the publicist and media-popularizing expression – for example, it is not necessary in a dissertation on CSR to explain under line what means “millennial” (page 102). My critical stand is not an act of pettiness but an advice to the author in case he decides to publish the text in a book. Publishing the doctoral dissertation would be interesting for beginners in business as well as for the numerous associations, initiatives and trainers in CSR.

The PhD student has indicated 5 titles of papers in compilations, 4 of which are still under print, while 2 are from future articles in the magazine “Philosophical

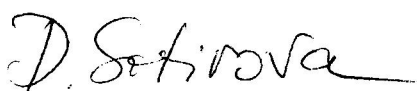
Alternatives”. I accept the declared with trust towards the responsibility of the author of dissertation on the topic of corporate responsibility.

The contributions of the doctoral thesis are formulated concisely and authentically. The perspective orientation in thinking about CSR is original, as seen in the five formulated contributions.

In conclusion, I would highlight that the presented work contains theoretical and applied results that are useful as summarized experience on CSR and the social face of Bulgarian business. My assessment of the doctoral thesis, the author's abstract of doctoral dissertation, the published papers of Plamen Bobokov, (whom I do not know in person), is entirely positive.

The presented work possesses the required completeness and actuality, academic and practical significance of a dissertation for “doctor” degree in Bulgaria. I would recommend Mr. Plamen Stoilov Bobokov to be awarded the Ph.D. to acquire the educational and scientific degree Doctor in the Professional field 3.5. Social communications and information sciences (Media & Communications - Public Relations).

December 2, 2019

Signature: 

/Professor PhD. Daniela Sotirova/