

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

Prepared by: **assoc. prof. Svetla Boneva, Ph.D, CGAP**
University of National and World Economy – Sofia
“International Economy and Policy” Faculty
Department of “International Economic Relations and Business”
Scientific specialty 05.02.10: “World Economy and International
Economic Relations”
Professional field 3.8: “Economy”

Object of the scientific opinion: **Ph.D thesis in the doctoral program “European studies” within professional field 3.8. “Political science” at Sofia University, Department of “European Studies”**

Prepared on the ground of: **Order of the rector of Sofia University and Decision of the Faculty council of the faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University, Protocol No 4/8.11.2022**

Author of the Ph.D thesis: **MARIELA IVANOVA SAVKOVA**

Title of the Ph.D thesis: **MONITORING AND EX-POST ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF EU COHESION POLICY IN BULGARIA**

1. Information regarding the candidate and the presented materials in the procedure

MARIELA IVANOVA SAVKOVA has been a Ph.D students in the “European studies” Doctoral program at the department of “European Studies” at Sofia University.

The Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University has provided the members of the scientific jury with the following documents: the doctoral thesis (dissertation), the annotation of the dissertation, a list of the publications of the candidate, and a list of the main scientific contributions in the doctoral thesis suggested by the author.

The doctoral thesis consists of an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and 2 appendixes. The text covers 263 pages and

contains 82 tables, 13 figures, 2 charts and 9 maps. The used literature covers a total number of 194 sources in Bulgarian and English languages.

2. General characteristics of the doctoral thesis

The first chapter examines the evolution, the objectives, the method, the term “cohesion” and the types of cohesion. The main stages in the EU enlargement policy have been studied, as well as the EU legislation in the field of its regional and structural policies, the Eurostat classification of the EU regions and the categories of regions. The processes of enlargement and federalisation of the EU with impact on the reaffirming of the EU cohesion policy have been researched as well as the objectives of each of the six financial frameworks of the EU, representing the most important priorities of each stage of the development of the EU.

The second part of the dissertation examines the development of the results of the empirical study of the author which includes 52 horizontal and vertical indicators for evaluation of the level of cohesion of Bulgaria and the impact of the EU cohesion policy on the regional disparities.

The third chapter of the dissertation offers a comparative analysis of the development of the level of cohesion of Bulgaria compared to the other CEE countries and the Danube macro region. The research of these countries supports the better understanding of the development of social-economical and territorial cohesion of Bulgaria. It contains conclusions and recommendations in the end related to the planning and the efficiency of the cohesion policy in the country.

The research topic is contemporary and important within the context of the current challenges for today’s European economy. The doctoral thesis stands out with well formulated research questions, research objectives and research tasks, clearly corresponding to the research topic. The literature sources are well selected, both Bulgarian and foreign authors research are tracked. No critical remarks concerning the structure, contents, style and technical design of the thesis – they demonstrate an excellent level.

3. Evaluation of the research results and research contributions and the importance of the dissertation

The results of the scientific research and publications of the candidate involve scientific and applied results: analysis, methodologies, evaluations, empirical results, practical conceptions in the above-mentioned main directions of the scientific research of the candidate. They fulfil the requirements for awarding the doctoral (Ph.D) degree.

The results of the research are clear and precisely formulated and can be used by other researchers, experts, consultants and analysts. The main contributions that could be outlined in this thesis are given and I accept them as formulated by the author of the thesis.

4. Evaluation of the publications

The seven publications of the author prove her excellent professional preparation and knowledge regarding the main Bulgarian and foreign authors in the field; application of proper research methods; her ability to formulate adequately motivated conclusions and proper recommendations based on her research:

1. **Савкова, М. (2022), „Пандемията Ковид-19, нова заплаха за изоставашите региони”,** Годишна научна конференция на Българската асоциация за европейски изследвания (БАЕИ) на тема: „65 години от подписването на Римските договори”. БАЕИ, София.
2. **Савкова, М. (2022), „Как работи социалната кохезия в Европейския съюз”,** XIII национална школа за докторантни и млади изследователи в социалните науки. „Пътища към устойчивото развитие: подходи и приноси на социалните науки“. Институт за изследване на населението и човека, БАН., (2022) /
3. **Savkova, M. (2022), „What is the future of federalism and europeanisation of the European Union?”(2022).** Perspectives for sustainable development. Globally and Locally - [Elektronski izvor]: thematic compendium / editors Edita Stojić Karanović, Kristijan Ristić. - Belgrade: International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation", Belgrade, Serbia. ISBN-978-86-82825-23-4
4. **Савкова, М. (2021), „Мониторинг и оценка на въздействието на кохезионната политика за държавите-членки на ЕС от Централна и Източна Европа (2007-2018 г.)”,** Том 1. Доклади на български език, Деветнадесета международна научна конференция “Членството на България в Европейския съюз: Тринадесет години по-късно”, Издателски комплекс– УНСС.
5. **Савкова, М. (2021), „Теоретични и правни измерения на кохезионната политика на Европейския съюз в България”,** Сборник с доклади от съвместна докторантска конференция на тема: “(Не)възможният ЕС - време на решения за общото бъдеще“ на катедра „Европеистика“, катедра „Политология“ и катедра „Публична администрация“, Философски факултет към СУ „Св. Климент Охридски“ и Фондация за свободата „Фридрих Науман“, издателство „Минрева“.
6. **Savkova, M. (2021), „Lessons learned from the last enlargement of the European Union“.** Perspectives of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Health - Globally and Locally - [Elektronski izvor]: thematic compendium / editors Edita Stojić Karanović, Kristijan Ristić. - Belgrade: International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation", 2021 (Belgrade:International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation"). ISBN-978-86-82825-22-7. Belgrade, Serbia.
7. **Savkova, M. (2020), „Is the cohesion of Danube countries possible?“. Socioeconomic and environmental aspects of sustainable development during the fourth industrial revolution. Thematic Compendium, Editors: Dr. Edita Stojić Karanović, Kristijan Ristić, International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation", 2021 (Belgrade : International Scientific Forum "Danube - River of Cooperation").ISBN-978-86-82825-21-0. Belgrade.**

5. Evaluation on the minimal national requirements

The materials that have been presented fulfil the minimal national requirements for awarding the doctoral (Ph.D) degree. This is valid for the quality of the doctoral thesis (the full text of the dissertation), the annotation of the dissertation and the list of the publications of the candidate and the indexations of the publications.

6. Critical remarks and recommendations

No substantial critical remarks to the candidate and his research. I have one

recommendation to the candidate – to translate in English (after the end of the procedure for the awarding of the academic degree “Doctor”) and to publish in proper foreign editions her doctoral thesis which is currently written in Bulgarian language and defined in Bulgaria. Thus the research will reach a broader audience.

7. Conclusion

The doctoral thesis titled “MONITORING AND EX-POST ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF EU COHESION POLICY IN BULGARIA” and the publications presented by the doctoral student MARIELA IVANOVA SAVKOVA in the current procedure for awarding the academic degree “Doctor” (Ph.D) announced by Sofia University cover all necessary requirements for the occupation of this academic degree. The publications of the candidate are original and valuable pieces of research, demonstrating the adequate scientific style of their author.

All of the abovementioned arguments and facts give me the ground to vote “YES” for the awarding of the academic degree “Doctor” to MARIELA IVANOVA SAVKOVA .

19.12.2022

Sofia

Signature: *С.Бонева*

(assoc. prof. Svetla Boneva, Ph.D)