

REVIEW

by Prof. **Tsveta Yordanova Zafirova**, PhD, University of Economics - Varna
of PhD thesis for obtaining an educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

in the higher education field 3. *Social, Economic and Legal Sciences*, professional field 3.7 *Administration and Management*, a doctoral program in Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Health Care)

Author: Iliyana Ancheva Georgieva

Topic: **The circular migration among Bulgarian health professionals – attitudes, challenges and prospects**

Scientific supervisors: Assoc. Prof. Mariya Rohova, PhD
Assoc. Prof. Vesselina Slavova, PhD

1. General description of the submitted materials

By the Order N P-109-479/ 16.11.2023 of the Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov" I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury for the defense of a PhD thesis entitled "**The circular migration among Bulgarian health professionals –attitudes, challenges and prospects**" for awarding educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 3. *Social, Economic and Legal Sciences*, professional field 3.7 *Administration and Management*, a doctoral program in Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Health Care). The PhD thesis author is **Iliyana Ancheva Georgieva** - assistant in the Department of Health Economics and Management with scientific supervisors Assoc. Prof. Mariya Rohova, PhD and Assoc. Prof. Vesselina Slavova, PhD from MU-Varna.

The set of materials submitted by Iliyana Georgieva is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of MU "Prof. Dr P. Stoyanov" and includes the following documents:

- application to the Rector of MU-Varna for disclosure of the defence procedure;
- CV;
- a notarized copy of a higher education diploma (Master's degree);

- orders for enrolment and disenrolment in the doctoral study;
- protocols for passing doctoral exams;
- Departmental Council minutes for preliminary discussion of the dissertation and readiness for public PhD defense;
- dissertation;
- PhD abstract;
- copies of scientific publications on the topic;
- a declaration of originality of the thesis;
- a declaration of the authenticity of the documents submitted for the defense;
- registration of profiles in scientific databases;
- similarity reference;
- reference for an up-to-date profile in scientific databases.

The presented circumstances and the attached documents show that the requirements of the Regulations of the MU-Varna are met and Iliyana Georgieva has the right to appear the defense of her dissertation.

2. Brief information about the PhD candidate

Iliyana Georgieva graduated bachelor's in International Management in 2015 and a master's in Public Finance in 2016 from the University of Economics - Varna. After graduation, she works as an expert Project activity at MU- Varna.

In 2019, she was enrolled as a full-time PhD student in the doctoral program “Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Health Care)”. In 2023, she won a competition for an assistant professor at the Department of Health Economics and Management. She has taught seminars in *Healthcare Marketing, Marketing Communication and PR, Marketing Researches, Social Marketing and Entrepreneurship, Marketing Analyses and Strategies, Introduction in Scientific Information and Researches*.

She speaks English and German.

3. General characteristics of the dissertation

The PhD thesis is structured in an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and 2 appendices with 188 pages. The bibliography includes 220 publications, including 200 in English. The main text (155 pages) contains 29 tables and 29 figures.

The individual sections (chapters and paragraphs) are presented in a logical sequence and serve the purpose of the dissertation. The citation is correct, and the style is scientific.

The chosen topic is current and significant now, when there is a significant shortage of medical specialists not only in our country, but also in the whole world. The development of a circular migration management model will help to make appropriate management decisions to ensure health services for the entire population.

The subject and object are precisely formulated and are logically derived from the topic of the dissertation. The author has derived six tasks, which she follows in the structure and content of the dissertation, in accordance with the formulated goal. The research thesis gives the direction of the research.

An appropriate instrumentation was applied in the realization of the set goals and tasks. The emphasis is the complex sociological method for researching medical professionals in relation to the specific features of migration in the studied target group.

The formulated four restrictive conditions specify the scope of the study and justify the methods applied in it.

Based on the above general presentation of the volume and structure, the thesis complies with the requirements of Article 27 (2) of the Regulations for the Application of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

4. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation

The structure and content clarify the topic of the dissertation. It is directly related to the research's subject, object, aim, and objectives. The research thesis is clearly formulated and substantiated - "through a targeted impact on migration factors and their transformation into motives for circular migration, the negative and positive consequences can be limited to a certain extent." Its proof is implemented through five research hypotheses.

The **introduction** contains all the necessary components. The relevance and significance of the researched topic have been proven. The degree of research of the problem in the scientific literature is determined, and the scientists are indicated, including and the Bulgarian ones, who studied the migration of medical specialists.

In the **first chapter**, Iliyana Georgieva presents the theoretical foundation based on the analysis and evaluation of a large volume of specialized literature. In a logical sequence, she followed the interpretations of the concept of "migration", expressing a categorical opinion regarding the most accurate representation of the meaning of the phenomenon. The reasons for migration in health care were sought on this basis. The migration theories were studied and, as a result of a comparative analysis, they were systematized according to different

signs as a basis for its clarification. The results of the studies of the "attracting" and "repelling" factors for the movement of health professionals are of interest, and the strongest incentive has been brought out - the economic one. The effects (positive and negative) of the migration of health professionals – for the individual, for the sending and receiving countries, are discussed.

Special attention has been paid to the study of the theoretical foundations of circular migration, and a significant volume of specialized literature has been analyzed. The EC definition was adopted as the most accurate representation of the phenomenon after a well-made systematization of the interpretations. The tripartite benefit of circular migration has been sought as an appropriate tool to address health systems challenges. The author demonstrates in-depth theoretical knowledge in the field. It shows excellent possibilities for formulating conclusions and generalizations.

In the **second chapter**, the results of the analysis of the legal framework in the area are shown, and the one in the EU has been studied, incl. and in Bulgaria. A contribution is the systematization of the examples of bilateral and multilateral world cooperation that stimulate it. The study of good practices for projects and programs in this area is of practical application. The focus of this chapter is the migration profile of healthcare professionals in Bulgaria. Despite the limited information, it has been developed in sufficient depth and gives an idea of circular migration in our country.

In the **third chapter**, the author applies in practice the selected research tools for the specific object. The results of sociological surveys of the attitudes towards migration of medical specialists in Bulgaria are discussed. The first is their opinion about the possibilities for professional realization and living conditions in our country. The factors influencing their choice of migration have been identified. It was concluded that those factors at the national level (the state and the health system) motivate them to go abroad, and the organizational ones (the medical facility) and the individual ones keep them in Bulgaria. The results of the empirical study give grounds for the generalization that the main reasons and factors for migration are economic, and for remigration - personal.

The emphasis of the second research, done through qualitative methods (in-depth interview), is on the experiences of those involved in circular migration. Iliyana Georgieva shows the skills to shape and present the results of the research in a logical and visual way,

to argue practical recommendations. Successfully applied methods of analysis and evaluation show serious knowledge in the field.

The combination of different sociological surveys in the conducted research is a guarantee of the reliability of the obtained results. On their basis, summaries were drawn, systematized in three groups: goals and motives for migration, transition from permanent to circular migration and conditions for the development of circular migration. This gives the formulated conclusions a practical direction and applicability, which is a contribution of the author. The benefits of circular migration are very skillfully presented as a result of applied (quantitative and qualitative) research, and the relationship between them is sought.

The presented conceptual model for stimulating the circular migration of medical specialists in Bulgaria is aimed at developing mechanisms for its stimulation in order to limit the negative and enhance the positive effects of it. An approach is proposed for its implementation in our health system, which proves its practical applicability. The dependence between the factors of circular migration in our country and its effects has been proven. Very clear and precise conclusions and recommendations are formulated for national, regional and medical facility level.

The conclusion summarizes the results obtained in the dissertation - the thesis and hypotheses have been proven, the goal and set tasks have been fulfilled.

5. Contributions and significance of the PhD thesis for the science and practice

The main contributions of Iliyana Georgieva's dissertation can be defined as scientific and applied. They represent an enrichment of the methodology for managing the health system in Bulgaria by stimulating the process of circular migration of medical specialists.

A. Scientific contributions

- The scientific knowledge of health systems management has been enriched through new systematizations and classifications of various concepts related to circular migration at the different levels of their definition.

- As a result of a thorough analysis and evaluation of the scientific literature, the main effects of circular migration on countries (sending and receiving) and medical professionals and its possibilities to limit negative consequences and enhance benefits are systematized.

- As a result of sociological studies, the factors for circular migration, its benefits and the tools for its stimulation have been identified.

B. Scientific and applied contributions

- Based on an analysis of the literature in the field and sociological studies, a conceptual model for stimulating circular migration has been developed.

- A methodological toolkit for the study of the circular migration of medical specialists in Bulgaria is proposed.

- Recommendations have been formulated, both methodological and practical, to stimulate circular migration at different levels in Bulgaria.

The mentioned contributions actually reflect the main achievements and results in Iliana Georgieva's dissertation work.

6. Assessment of the publications on the PhD thesis

The author has attached copies of 5 publications - four articles and one scientific report, including one in English. The attached publications reflect the results achieved in the PhD thesis and are related to the research problems.

7. Personal participation of the author

The author has also attached the declaration of originality of the results required by the Regulations for the Application of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The thesis and abstract content confirm that they are the author's work.

8. Abstract of the PhD thesis

The abstract is 54 pages and corresponds to the content of the PhD thesis. It presents accurately and in a synthesized form the study and the achieved results.

9. Critical comments and recommendations

No significant theoretical, logical and methodological errors were found in the dissertation submitted for review. Some non-essential, mostly of a technical nature, typical of this kind of research have been admitted.

I would recommend the author to continue her research in the field, as the circular migration of medical professionals is a very serious problem in our healthcare system. The results of her doctoral dissertation should find greater prominence among health care leaderships at the national, regional, and hospital level.

I have the following questions for the PhD candidate:

- Is there a circular migration of health economists in Bulgaria and abroad?

- What, in your opinion, is the factor with the strongest influence on graduating students - future medical specialists, to go to work abroad? Are there similar studies in our country and what do their results show?

- What makes it necessary to stimulate circular migration instead of limiting it?

10. Personal impressions

I do not know Iliyana Georgieva personally. My impressions are only from the materials submitted for the defense.

CONCLUSION

The presented dissertation is a completed study of an actual problem of the Bulgarian practice in the field of health care. Based on the overall assessment made in this review, I believe that it meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Application of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of the MU "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov".

The dissertation shows that Iliyana Georgieva possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge in the scientific specialty "*Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Health Care)*", demonstrating skills for conducting scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive evaluation and I propose to the honourable scientific jury to award Iliyana Ancheva Georgieva the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 3. *Social, Economic and Legal Sciences*, professional field 3.7 *Administration and Management*, scientific specialty "*Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Health Care)*".

21.12.2023

Reviewer:.....

(Prof. Tsveta Zafirova, PhD)

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