

STATEMENT OF OPINION

From **Assoc. Prof. Radka Petrova Ivanova, PhD**, University of Economics – Varna, Faculty of Management, Department of Management and Administration, Scientific Specialty 05.02.20. Social Management.

Member of the scientific jury according to order No. R-109-479/16.11.2023 of the Rector of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna.

Regarding: the defense of a dissertation on the topic: **Circular Migration of Health Professionals - Attitudes, Challenges and Perspectives in Bulgaria** author: **Iliyana Ancheva Georgieva**

for obtaining an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" higher education field 3. *Social, Economic and Legal Sciences*, professional subfield 3.7. *Administration and Management*, scientific specialty "*Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Healthcare)*".

I. Data on the procedure and general evaluation of the dissertation work

Iliyana Ancheva Georgieva was a full-time doctoral student in the scientific specialty "*Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Healthcare)*" in Department of Economics and Health Care Management, Faculty of Public Health at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna.

The dissertation work was discussed and directed for defense at a meeting of the Department of "Economics and Health Care Management" according to Protocol No. 12/23.10.2023. All the tasks set in the individual plan of the doctoral student were completed and the required number of credits and positive attestation were achieved.

The doctoral student has focused on a contemporary research topic in her dissertation work, focusing on a significant current problem characterized by the dynamic rates of development in the global aspect.

The total volume of the dissertation is 188 pages. It includes an introduction (6 pages), three chapters (139 pages), a conclusion (2 pages), a list of references (16 pages) and two appendices (17 pages). The main text contains 29 tables and 29 figures. The list of used literary sources includes 220 sources, of which 20 are in Bulgarian and 200 in English.

II. Characterization and evaluation of the content of the dissertation work

In the **introduction** the doctoral student presents the topicality of the chosen research topic, the challenges faced by the health systems of countries around the world, the significance of the problem of medical specialists' shortage in global terms. The subject and the object of research are defined; its purpose is indicated, as well as six research tasks for its implementation. The thesis and five hypotheses of the research are formulated. The research approach and methods used by the doctoral student in the course of his research are presented. The described limitations characterize the scope of the dissertation work.

In the **first chapter** the doctoral student examines the theoretical foundations in the migration of health professionals, presenting various concepts and analyzing the specifics of this problem. Different definitions of the concept of migration and the forms of this phenomenon were examined, with the clarification that the focus of the dissertation is concentrated on the international

migration of health professionals. The theories of migration are characterized in terms of their classifications, features, as well as the main criticisms of the theories. The main reasons for migration are presented in two groups, according to the author's understanding, namely - "repelling" and "attracting" factors, with the economic motives being designated as those of greatest importance. The effects of the movement of health professionals, the positive and negative consequences for the health systems are also systematized.

The phenomenon of *circular migration* is characterized, its importance for health systems is analyzed, and the main forms and causes of circular migration are deduced. At the end of the first chapter, conclusions are made about the significance of the migration of health professionals regarding the defined goal and tasks of the dissertation work.

In the **second chapter** of the dissertation, attention is focused on the possibilities of transition from the permanent nature of migration movements to a circular one. The methodology of the research is presented, and an attempt was made to track the changes in the migration movements of the Bulgarian medical specialists. Quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis were used (systemic, descriptive health-political, comparative analysis, analysis of secondary quantitative data, sociological and statistical methods).

The sociological survey includes an online survey and an interview. The survey was conducted in the period May-June 2022 by a specialized sociological agency among doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives in Bulgaria through a specialized online survey consisting of 36 questions, mostly of a closed type. During the period November 2022 - June 2023, an interview was conducted among purposively selected health professionals who participated in circular migration. The questionnaire developed for the interview included three main topics relating to the goals and motivations for migration of medical professionals; the causes of circular migration, difficulties encountered and perceived benefits and negatives of participation in the phenomenon; the assessment of the conditions in the country for the development of circular migration.

The European and national legislative framework in the field of circular mobility, codes for the ethical recruitment of health professionals adapted to the specificities of the health systems of individual countries, bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements, various projects and programs, as the most frequently applied tools for stimulating circular migration at European and international level. The migration profile of health professionals in Bulgaria was also examined, and a comparison was made with those in the EU for the period 2010-2020. At the end of the second chapter, the doctoral student systematized several main conclusions regarding the migration movements of Bulgarian health professionals.

In the **third chapter** of the dissertation, the results of the conducted study are analyzed regarding the attitudes towards migration of medical specialists in Bulgaria. When forming the sample, the type of settlement and the occupation of the respondents were used as determining factors. The opinion of the respondents about the opportunities for professional realization and living conditions in Bulgaria was investigated. The factors determining the choice of the respondents whether to live and work in our country are presented. The question of the migration of health professionals in the conditions of the emerging COVID-19 pandemic is also regarded, which does not increase the attitudes of the majority of respondents to work abroad.

Among the main conclusions drawn at the end of the third chapter is the statement that the medical specialists in Bulgaria are highly dissatisfied with the conditions in the health care system and the factors that deter them to the highest degree are related to it. It was found that the largest proportions of medical professionals with experience abroad are nurses. Regarding the specialists-doctors with a higher interest in migration, those with less professional experience stand out. A comparison was made between the results obtained from the respondents who took part in the online survey and those who took part in the conducted interview. Similarities were found regarding the main reasons for migration and remigration, the main benefits of circular migration, as well as a lack of consensus regarding the conditions that can stimulate circular migration among

medical professionals. A *circular migration promotion* model has been developed, including migration factors, effects of migration, circular migration promotion tools.

Conclusions are drawn at the end of the third chapter regarding the results of the study, the confirmation of four of the hypotheses and the rejection of hypothesis number three due to the lack of statistically significant differences in satisfaction with the living and working conditions in Bulgaria between the health professionals who also worked in another country and those who have not worked abroad. The research thesis formulated in the introduction of the dissertation is confirmed. Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, recommendations were formulated at several levels: national, regional, and at a medical facility level.

In the **conclusion** of the dissertation, the main conclusions of the doctoral student's research are presented, following the logical structure of the dissertation. It is formulated briefly and clearly.

III. Contributions and relevance of the dissertation into practice

The reference to the contributions in the dissertation work of the doctoral student Iliyana Georgieva reflects the research done in a *theoretical-methodological aspect* (attracting and retaining factors for remigration, as well as the main effects of migration on countries of origin, destination countries and medical specialists and provided by circular migration), a *scientific-applied aspect* (a methodological toolkit was developed for the study of migration attitudes among Bulgarian medical specialists, as well as a model for stimulating circular migration) and a *practical-applied aspect* (recommendations were formulated for stimulating circular migration opportunities migration in three directions – national, regional and hospital level).

I accept the contributions indicated on page 52 of the abstract.

IV. Review of the abstract and the publications

The **abstract** has a volume of 54 pages. It fully and correctly reflects the structure of the research, conclusions and recommendations that the dissertation student has formulated. Contributions and publications on the dissertation work are properly formatted.

Four of the publications presented by the doctoral student are independent, and the fifth is co-authored. They reflect the main aspects of the dissertation work and are published in specialized publications with a medical theme.

In lexical and stylistic terms, I believe that the dissertation work, abstract and publications are developed in accordance with the modern academic style of writing, are characterized by understandable scientific language, appropriate use of terminology in the chosen field of research. The literary and informational sources used in the development are correctly cited.

V. Critical notes and recommendations

I have no critical notes.

Recommendation: the PhD student should continue and deepen his research in the chosen field.

VI. Personal impression of the doctoral student

I do not know the doctoral student Iliana Georgieva personally. I got acquainted with her scientific developments in connection with the current procedure.

VII. Conclusion

My general impression of the presented dissertation work on the topic "**Circular Migration of Health Professionals - Attitudes, Challenges and Perspectives in Bulgaria**" is that it is completed and meets the requirements of the "Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria". The dissertation has the necessary qualities of independent scientific research. There is a theoretical analysis and synthesis of current issues. It contains contributions of

a scientific-theoretical, scientific-applied and practical-applied nature. The set tasks have been solved and the research thesis has been proven.

The mentioned strength of the presentation of the PhD thesis are the reason to give a **positive assessment** and to offer to the esteemed jury **the award** of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "*Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Healthcare)*" in professional subfield 3.7. *Administration and Management* of **Iliyana Ancheva Georgieva**.

08.01.2024

Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Assoc. Prof. Radka Ivanova, PhD)

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
2016/679