To
The members of the Scientific Jury
D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics
Finance and Credit Department

STANDPOINT

of a member of the scientific jury, determined by Order No. **1158/ 23.10.2024.**
of the Rector of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov
on dissertation for awarding educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (in Economics)

Author of the standpoint: Assoc. Prof. Vanya Dencheva Tsonkova, PhD, Department of Finance and Accounting, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Professional field: 3.8. Economics (Finance, Money Circulation, Credit and Insurance)

Author of the dissertation: Svetlana Dimitrova Avrionova, PhD student, d010221243, doctoral programme "Finance, money circulation, credit and insurance (finance)"

Dissertation topic: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TAX REVENUES IN BULGARIA

Dissertation Advisor: Prof. Rumyana Lilova, PhD

I. General presentation of the dissertation work

1. Subject

As the **subject** of her dissertation, the doctoral student defines "the toolkit for assessing the factors affecting the state of tax revenues of Bulgaria and the EU member states", and the **thesis** presented in the introduction and proved by her in the course of her presentation is: "in the conditions of a dynamic socio-economic environment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Bulgaria maintains stable budget revenues from tax sources, in the absence of individual and aggregate conditionality between them and the main economic, fiscal and social indicators affecting their dynamics, characteristic of the other EU member states."

2. Volume

The volume of the dissertation is 212 standard pages, including: an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. Also included are numerous appendices with results from the calculation procedures in Excel.

3. Structure

The structure of the dissertation work is classic, and through it the doctoral student follows the realization of the set research goal and tasks, as well as the proof of the thesis.

In the **introduction**, the choice of the topic is thoroughly motivated – on the one hand, the author argues for its relevance, and on the other, she emphasizes the scientific novelty and practical significance of the research. Thus, precisely and in detail she formulates the purpose, the object, the subject, the thesis, the research tasks, the methodology and the limiting framework.

In the **first chapter**, based on a review of the views of our and foreign authors, as well as normative statements, the inseparable relationship of the state and taxes is emphasized and the primary role of the latter for the fisc and as an instrument of socio-economic policy is justified, including in crisis conditions. Further, against the background of a chronological presentation of the main financial-economic and health crises, the researches and conclusions of representatives of established economic theories and of modern scientists regarding the effects of tax policy on the national economy are synthesized. This gives reason for the author to claim that the tax policy can be effectively implemented only when

taking into account the specific socio-economic features of the country. At the end of this chapter, attention is paid to the importance of the tax burden in the implementation of the national tax policy, and specifically in the context of a deteriorated general economic situation as a result of the pandemic.

In the **second chapter**, by means of a study of official national and supranational documents, the applied anti-cyclical measures in the conditions of Covid-19 in 7 EU countries are analyzed in detail, summarized as measures of monetary policy, fiscal policy, income policy and labour market policy. In this section, the measures implemented in Bulgaria are presented and evaluated in a comparative plan, summarizing that "the fiscal policy implemented in our country includes a rich set of instruments..." (p. 96). On this basis and by comparison with the financial crisis of 2008-2009, the changes in tax revenues in the EU were studied, using three groups of indicators – macroeconomic, fiscal and structural. It was concluded about the faster recovery of indicator values during the pandemic.

The **third chapter** is the empirical research part. The doctoral student argues the logic of the research with the results of the review of scientific literature in the field of fiscal policy, finding that most authors focus on the effects of the applied tax system and policy on public finances and the national economy. That is why Svetlana Avrionova singles out a system of macroeconomic, fiscal and socio-economic variables, whose individual or aggregate impact on the "tax revenue to GDP" indicator should be established or rejected. By using correlation analysis and a linear regression model with one or more independent variables, the doctoral student makes important conclusions about the dynamics of tax revenues (measured against GDP) of the EU member states in the conditions of a post-pandemic environment. She also proves the thesis put forward in the introduction about the stability of tax revenues in Bulgaria and lack of individual and aggregate conditionality between them and the relevant independent variables, characteristic of other EU member states.

The **conclusion** summarizes the results of the author's research.

4. Bibliography

The doctoral student used 125 sources in Bulgarian and English, including scientific literature by Bulgarian and foreign authors in the field of tax theory and policy, official documents, as well as statistical information from national and international institutions.

5. Appendices to the document

The dissertation includes numerous appendices – results from the application of statistical analyses in Excel. The exposition contains many tables and figures illustrating the key results and important generalizations.

II. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation

1. Assessment of the relevance and development of the researched scientific problem

The dissertation is dedicated to a current and significant topic - the wide-ranging impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on various management systems, in the specific case - on public finances and tax revenues. Both in the introduction and in the presentation, the doctoral student acknowledges the existence of research interest in taxation in the conditions of a multiple crisis, but highlights an insufficiently researched aspect, namely - systematization and quantification of the individual and aggregate influence of individual factors on the budget revenues from taxes in the specific conjuncture.

In terms of content, the work represents a completed scientific research work that meets the generally accepted requirements. It shows the author's skill for in-depth critical reading and purposeful presentation of theoretical concepts, for analyzing and evaluating applied policies and practices, for arguing and implementing an own model for research in the specific field, for summaries and conclusions from the conducted studies.

2. Opinion on the language, volume and toolbox of the dissertation work

The dissertation is written in language intended for a competent professional audience with precise use of economic and financial terminology. Some grammatical and syntactic imperfections are found in places, without detracting from the overall academic style of presentation.

Literary sources are cited in accordance with established requirements and in compliance with the rules of scientific ethics. The applied scientific methods for extraction, processing and analysis of large-scale data testify to excellent skills and competences in the field of statistics, econometrics and working with specialized software.

In the dissertation, the author's presence stands out significantly, both in the thorough and precise presentation of the theoretical statements and methodology, and in their integration into a complete and original own algorithm for research and modelling. The volume, structure and content are relevant to the set goals and objectives, the subject of research and the set thesis.

3. Opinion as to how well the author's thesis abstract accurately and completely reflects the work

Mandatory elements are present in the thesis abstract: general characteristics; main content of work; directions for future research work; a reference to the scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation work; a list of the PhD student's publications; a certificate of compliance with the national requirements under the Regulations for the implementation of the Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria; declaration of originality of the dissertation work.

The abstract faithfully reflects the structure, logic and content of the work. The doctoral student has presented four publications related to the dissertation – two articles and two papers indexed in NACID. One of the articles is in English and is co-authored.

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation work

The author formulates six contributions that really reflect the true merits of the work. I would single out the main contributions of Svetlana Avrionova's dissertation as follows:

1) A detailed analysis and systematization of the anti-cyclical crisis management measures applied in 7 EU member states is carried out, in the light of which the Bulgarian practice is examined and evaluated. An essential point here is the visual summary of the used tools in tabular and graphic form (Table 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and Fig. 2.2, 2.3, 2.4).

2) Through a system of three groups of indicators – macroeconomic, fiscal and structural, the changes in tax revenues in the member states as a result of the pandemic for the period 2019-2021 are studied and a comparison is made with the changes caused by the financial and economic crisis for the period 2007 -2009. In this way, the differences in the manifestation of the two crises and the adequacy of the applied countercyclical tools are highlighted.

3) An author's econometric model is developed and tested, through which the individual and aggregate influence of key macroeconomic, fiscal and socio-economic factors on the share of tax revenues in relation to GDP for the member countries in the conditions of Covid-19 is investigated. On this basis, a multi-factor linear regression model is also proposed for forecasting tax revenues for the member states, for which a strong correlation with the relevant indicators has been proven.

These contributions are the personal work of the PhD student. They enrich the methodology of fiscal analysis and present opportunities for planning tax revenues in the presence of crises of a different nature. I believe that the guidelines given in the abstract for the future research work are adequate, feasible and their results would be useful.

IV. Critical notes and questions on dissertation work

The work presented is a complete, thorough and practically useful scientific study. I can make some remarks to the doctoral student, not to belittle the final positive result of her work, but to express my support for her in the future development of her scientific and professional competences.

1) Given the title of the dissertation, referring to Bulgaria, more substantial attention should be paid to the interpretation of the results of the applied methodology for our country.

2) When presenting the applied anti-cyclical measures in the individual member states, it is correct to refer to the exact name of their tax laws, and not to use their Bulgarian equivalents (e.g. p. 66 for Romania, p. 63 for Greece).

I cannot define the indicated weaknesses as essential and damaging to the merits of the dissertation work. I have the following question for the doctoral student:

In the dissertation, specifically in chapter three, the lack of correlation and cause-and-effect dependence between the studied indicators and the tax revenues in the state budget of Bulgaria is proved. *What then is the reason for the stability of tax receipts in Bulgaria in the conditions of the Covid-19 crisis and the observed similar results with countries that are different in a number of respects - Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark and Hungary?*

V. Summary evaluation of the dissertation work and conclusion

The presented dissertation meets the requirements of the national and internal regulations at the Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics . Through it, the author demonstrates very good theoretical preparation in the field of macroeconomics and finance, knowledge of the statistical-econometric toolkit, as well as competencies for its application in the analysis of financial-economic problems. There is the necessary relevance and significance of the developed problem, real scientific value and novelty of the author's proposals. The ideas and results of the conducted research have been popularized at national conferences and in specialized publications.

All this gives me grounds for a positive assessment of the dissertation work and to propose to the respected members of the Scientific Jury to vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the doctoral program "Finance, monetary circulation, credit and insurance (finance)" of PhD student Svetlana Dimitrova Avrionova.

11 November 2024
Veliko Tarnovo

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Assoc. Prof. Vanya Tsonkova