

# STATEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL OPINION

Delivered by:

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**University of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski**

based on the materials submitted for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

field of Higher Education **3. Social, economic, and legal sciences**

Professional Field **3.8. Economics**

PhD Program **Economics and Management (Industry)**

for the candidate **Delyan Lazarov Lazarov.**

**Dissertation Title:** *"Formation and Stimulation of the Innovative Activity of Enterprises"*

**Research Supervisor:** Prof. Milen Baltov, PhD; Prof. Yulia Yorgova, PhD, Burgas Free University

## **1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the PhD Student**

It is the Order № UMO 29 of October 06, 2022 of the Rector of the Burgas Free University (BFU), which designates me as a Full Member on duty for the Scientific Jury Panel to deliver professional assertion on a procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on the topic *"Formation and Stimulation of the Innovation Activity of Enterprises"* for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8 Economics, PhD program Economics and Management (Industry). The author of the dissertation is Delyan Lazarov Lazarov - PhD student in full-time studies at the Center for Economic and Management Sciences with supervisors Prof. Dr. Milen Baltov and Prof. Dr. Julia Yorgova from Burgas Free University.

In accordance with Art. 17 (4) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of BSU, the PhD Student has attached three scientific publications that present reports of national scientific conferences to the submitted set of electronic materials. The documents are in accordance with the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB).

## **2. Relevance of the Topic**

The dissertation work is clearly argued to be relevant in terms of determining working methods for the transformation of innovation activity in the growth of competitiveness at the level of individual enterprises. The doctoral student has identified a number of circumstances and considerations that have led to the determination of the necessity to investigate theoretical and methodological aspects of the interaction between innovation and reproduction processes.

### **3. Understanding the Issue**

The research's defined goal, tasks, object, subject, and thesis clearly correspond to the doctoral student's in-depth knowledge of the problem, and as a result of the empirical study, the creation and implementation of mechanisms to increase innovation activity in small and medium-sized enterprises is planned. The dissertation is 270 pages long. The bibliographic reference contains 348 titles, including scientific literature, reports from international and national scientific conferences, articles indexed in primary and secondary databases, and business studies. The presence of 33 figures, 31 tables, and two graphs in the text indicates a clear presentation of the obtained results.

### **4. Research Methodology**

The elaborated research methodology allows for the achievement of the goal and the acquisition of an adequate answer to the tasks solved in the dissertation work. The study employed a variety of scientific approaches and methods, including inductive and deductive reasoning, statistical methods, the comparative method, the case method, the survey method, and the observation method. The genesis, characteristics, and possibilities for increasing the efficiency of small and medium-sized enterprises' innovation activity are clarified using these methods.

### **5. Characterization and Evaluation of the Dissertation Work and Contributions**

The dissertation's first chapter is 177 pages long and presents an in-depth literature review in the context of theoretical aspects of innovation and innovation activity, with the author primarily referring to foreign research. In terms of defining the innovation phenomenon, I rate the logical structure as good. As a high level of analytical abilities is evident, I can point to a categorical contribution of the doctoral student in a theoretical aspect.

The second chapter includes methodical tools for developing, stimulating, and forming the enterprise's innovative activity. This dissertation section is 24 pages long and presents the elaborated constructs based on the literature review. The quantitative approach is based on data from a specially designed questionnaire for interviewing SME owners, with questions grouped and a rationale for their inclusion.

The third chapter (volume 39 pages) contains the findings of an empirical study of Bulgarian firms' innovation performance. The responses to the individual questions were visualized using figures and tables, and descriptive statistics were used. In terms of summarizing key points from the dissertation work, I rate the conclusion as good. The doctoral student's contributions are related to the enrichment, concretization, and refinement of existing scientific knowledge, as well as the application of existing methods for solving a specific economic problem with formulated conclusions and recommendations for entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable development management practice.

In light of the validation of the obtained scientific and applied results, I believe that a better balance in the volume of the individual chapters of the dissertation work is appropriate, with the volume of the first chapter being more than four times that of the analysis of the research results. The conclusion is too brief (2 pages) and could be expanded to include an analysis of the results, a proposal for future research on the topic, and an argumentation of the contributions made in the dissertation work from chapter, i.e. of scientific, scientific-applied, and applied results.

No plagiarism was found in the materials provided for review, and I attach to my opinion a report from a scientific work check in the specialized software for checking plagiarism StrikePlagiarism.

## **6. Evaluation of the Publications and Personal Contribution of the Doctoral Student**

The doctoral student has provided three publications that reflect the dissertation results. The materials are published reports of national scientific conferences, and all three are written in Bulgarian and have a single author, Delyan Lazarov. I was not given information about the publications' established citations, and the papers were not indexed in authoritative databases.

1. Lazarov, D. (2017) *Self-organizing production*, 56 Scientific conference of Ruse University "Industry 4.0. Business environment. Quality of life".

2. Lazarov, D. (2019) *Digitization as a strategy for asset optimization*, XX Scientific and technical conference of Burgas Free University.

3. Lazarov, D. (2020) *Innovations and growth of companies*, XXI Conference on Student Scientific Creativity at Burgas Free University.

My knowledge of the scientific works provided leads me to the general conclusion that they contain scientific results pertaining to the enrichment, concretization, and refinement of existing scientific knowledge, as well as the application of various methods for solving a specific economic problem with formulated conclusions and recommendations for enterprise innovation management. The overall result of the accumulated points according to the national criteria in the PPZRASRB indicates that the publications fulfill the requirements in the ZRASRB, *Group of indicators D, item 7. Articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes* - 3 reports x 10 points = 30 points. I highly appreciate the personal participation of the doctoral student in the conducted dissertation research and consider that the formulated contributions and obtained results are his personal merit.

## **7. Abstract**

The content and quality of the abstract reflect the main results achieved in the dissertation and correspond to the requirements of the BSU Regulations.

## 8. Recommendations for Future Use of Dissertation Contributions and Results

Six scientific contributions and five scientific and applied contributions are argued based on the references for the dissertation work. I can make the following notes and recommendations to support the PhD student's future research work:

- 1) to continue publication activity in publications with a high impact factor/rank;
- 2) to develop a new direction in areas of interest such as digitization;
- 3) to present the results of his studies at international conferences;
- 4) to investigate in greater depth other problems, no less important for improvement and directly related to the impact of innovative technologies on the welfare of society.

## CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific and scientific-applied results that represent an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and the relevant Regulations of the BSU.

The dissertation presents that the PhD student Delyan Lazarov has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Economics and Management (Industry), demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to awarded the educational and scientific degree "**doctor**" to **Delyan Lazarov Lazarov** in the field of higher education **3. Social, economic and legal sciences** , professional field **3.8 Economics**, doctoral program **Economics and Management (Industry)**.

01.12.2022

**Author of the opinion:** .....

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