

REVIEW

PhD thesis for defense of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in 3. Social, business and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, PhD Program in Economics and Management (Agriculture)

Author of the PhD thesis: Erblina Pira, PhD student at the Department of Economics at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Title of the PhD thesis: ECONOMIC GROWTH AS A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – CASE OF REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

Reviewer: assoc. prof. dr. Zornitsa Dimova Stoyanova, UNWE, Natural Resource Economics department, professional field 3.8 Economics, specialty Economics and Management (Agricultural management), a member of the Scientific Jury with Order № РД - 16 - 548 / 25.06.2020 of the Rector at the AU

I. General presentation of the PhD thesis

The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defense under the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria from the Department of Economics at the AU - Plovdiv. In terms of content, it consists of an introduction and an exposition in four chapters.

The PhD thesis include 165 standard pages and meets the requirements for this type of research. The content of the work is balanced and the chapters are of a size that allows to realize the tasks set in the dissertation. This allows Pira to reveal her opinion and ideas.

The literature review is rich and contains sources in Latin. The dissertation provides an in-depth review of the existing literature and the author's opinions. In this regard the opinion of Erblina Pira related to economic growth as a factor for sustainable economic development also could be found. The approach taken by the author of the dissertation is moderately critical, which allows her to present her own views.

The dissertation is rich in illustrative material that visualizes the performed analyzes. The dissertation includes 40 tables and 22 figures. The figures presenting the PEST and SWOT analysis make a good impression. The analytical part of the dissertation is also supported by sufficient figures proving the performed statistical analyzes and the presented results from the qualitative research.

The dissertation has a scientific style and is written in high economic language. No deviations, repetitions or contradictions were detected. The work is balanced and proportionate.

II. Assessment of the form and content of the PhD thesis

The main purpose of the dissertation is that the variables examined in the work have an impact on economic growth, which creates conditions for sustainable economic development. The purpose is decomposed into several sub-objectives, and they are connected with the study of :1) relationship between growth and economic development; 2) relationship between the different variables presented in the study and economic growth; 3) the impact of economic factors as FDI, unemployment, trade balance, agriculture on economic growth;4) the impact of social factors as poverty, education on economic growth; 5) the impact of environmental factors (CO₂, doing business) on economic growth; 6) the problems encountered in the case of factors and the creation of an overall climate conducive to faster and higher economic growth.

To achieve this goal, in the dissertation are logically identified the following research hypotheses, which should be confirmed or rejected:

- ✓ Foreign direct investments are positively correlated to economic growth.
- ✓ Unemployment is negatively correlated to economic growth.
- ✓ Poverty is negatively correlated to economic growth.
- ✓ The education level is positively correlated to economic growth.
- ✓ Business environment is positively correlated to economic growth.
- ✓ CO₂ is negatively correlated to economic growth.
- ✓ Trade balance is positively correlated to economic growth.
- ✓ Agriculture is positively correlated to economic growth.

The main content of the dissertation is presented in four chapters. The first chapter includes

literature review of the theories of growth, the three pillars of sustainable development and their relationship. A part on sustainable economic development through sustained economic growth, as well as the importance of economic sustainability and Kosovo's growth history are logically included. This part of the study also presents the characteristics of Kosovo's macroeconomic parameters with an emphasis on GDP, public debt, trade and remittances.

The second chapter presents the methodological framework of the research and the used methodological tools. Quantitative and qualitative research methods are used in the dissertation. From the quantitative methods, correlation analysis is used. For the purposes of the applied quantitative methods and the development of the necessary analyzes, data on variables such as investment, employment, education, poverty, CO₂, business environment, trade balance etc. are used. The qualitative methods applied to analyze the impact of various factors on economic growth in Kosovo are the strategic analyzes - PEST and SWOT. The identified from the PhD student research questions that serve the implementation of the two qualitative analyzes, as well as her argumentation for the use of these qualitative analyzes for the purposes of the PhD thesis, could be positively assessed.

The third chapter of the dissertation presents the results of the empirical research, making a very good impression of the analyzes of GDP, foreign direct investment, the relative share of the unemployed, poverty, expressed as daily consumption per capita, business environment, carbon dioxide, indicators, related to agriculture as arable land, area and yields of cultivated crops etc. Based on the analysis of the various indicators, a linear regression is realized to express the coefficients of interdependence between the independent variables and economic development. In this chapter of the work, the performed PEST and SWOT analyzes deserve high appreciation, as they identify the factors that have a significant impact on economic growth in Kosovo, as well as the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the environment.

Fourth chapter includes a conclusion and recommendations for achieving sustainable economic development. Some of the recommendations are focused on attracting the quality of FDI in Kosovo, reducing unemployment and poverty. Special attention is paid to proposals aimed at improving the indicators in the country's agriculture. Groups of recommendations given by the PhD student are dedicated to improving education in Kosovo and the business climate.

The main data sources used in the dissertation are the data of World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, the Central Bank, the Ministry of Finance and the Environment Agency.

III. Scientific and practically applied contributions of the dissertation:

The following scientific and practically applied contributions can be outlined in the dissertation:

- ✓ The theories of growth and sustainable economic development through economic growth are enriched.
- ✓ A methodology for studying economic growth as a factor for achieving sustainable economic development has been developed.
- ✓ A detailed dynamic analysis of the factors influencing on the economic development are prepared.
- ✓ The strategic factors that have an impact on the achievement of sustainable economic development have been identified.
- ✓ Practical and applied recommendations have been developed for achieving sustainable economic development attracting FDI, reducing unemployment and poverty, improving education, business climate, etc.

IV. Evaluation of dissertation publications

Erblina Pira has applied evidence for her publication in the specialized literature. She presents three articles in the following journals: Balkan Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, Knowledge International Journal and International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research. They are directly related to the topic of the dissertation and reflect the main parts of it. The publications are in the period 2018-2019 and all of them are independent.

V. Evaluation of the autoreferat

The autoreferat correctly reflects the content of the dissertation, including the necessary logical sequence. It gives the general characteristics of the work, the structure and the content and a short exposition of the dissertation, the publications.

The texts of other authors that are used in the dissertation are correctly cited. The declaration of originality signed by the PhD student Pira guarantees that the presented work is author's and have original character.

VI. Critical notes and questions

I have the following question for PhD student Pira:

✓ What is the reason for the fact that most of the analyzed indicators are defined as "Weakness" in the SWOT matrix ?

I recommend Erblina Pira in her future researches to expand the PEST analysis by including other strategic factors and transform it into a PESTEL analysis.

VII. Conclusion

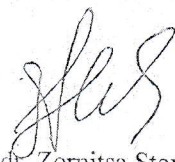
The Pira's dissertation is an independent study of an actual problem, developed in depth and containing all the necessary contributions for the required degree. PhD student Pira shows in-depth knowledge in the field of her study, as well she presents opportunities for independent research on a actual economic problem. The dissertation meets the requirements of LDASRB and the regulations for the implementation of the Law in the AU Plovdiv.

On this basis, I appreciate positively the PhD thesis and suggest to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to decide to give Erblina Rahim Pira the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.8. "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agriculture)".

Sofia

27.07.2020

Reviewer:


/assoc. prof. dr. Zornitsa Stoyanova/