



## STANDPOINT

on the dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in: field of higher education: **3.Economic, social and legal sciences**, professional field: **3.8 Economics**, scientific specialty: **Economics and management (agriculture)**.

Author of the dissertation: Ivanka Dimitrova Dimitrova, full-time Ph.D. student at the Department of Economics at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Topic of the dissertation: "INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF TOUR OPERATOR AND TRAVEL AGENCY ACTIVITY"

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Angel Stankov Sarov, Institute of Agricultural Economics at the Agricultural Academy; field of higher education: 3.Economic, Social and Legal Sciences, professional field: 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty: Economics and Management (Agriculture), appointed as a member of the scientific jury by Order № RD-16 - 1430/20.12.2024 by the Rector of the AU.

### 1. Relevance of the problem.

In recent years, the challenges facing the tourism industry, and in particular travel agents and tour operators, related to their sustainable development on the tourism market in Bulgaria, have been increasingly deepening. Focus is placed on the imperfections of the institutional mechanisms - formal rights and informal rules, which indicate various problems. They, in turn, hinder the possibility of effective service to end users, often expressed in an increase in costs for tour operators and travel agents.

### 2. Aim, tasks, hypotheses and methods of research.

The aim, tasks, object and subject of the study are precisely formulated, logically linked to the title and to each other. A main hypothesis has been constructed, which is decomposed into five sub-hypotheses and, based on the results achieved in the study, allows them to be confirmed or rejected. The main hypothesis focuses attention on the shortcomings of the institutional environment, leading to some distortions in the activities of the tour operator and travel agent industry, not corresponding to their main activity. The five sub-hypotheses skillfully adapt the imperfections of the market, governance structure, property rights, the principal-agent problem, "free riding", opportunistic behavior, information asymmetry and transaction costs identified in institutional theory. The author boldly applies tools for institutional analysis based on Williamson (1996) and successfully integrates institutional parameters through the interaction between institutional factors to answer the questions of what influences uncertainty, why specificity increases/decreases, and whether increasing/decreasing the number of transactions is good. Analysis and synthesis; deductive and systematic approach;

observation and alternative scenario method; comparative and extended analysis; descriptive analysis are used. Statistical methods are applied to collect data from institutional sources, as well as own observations.

### **3. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results.**

Doctoral student Ivanka Dimitrova Dimitrova has visualized the dissertation work with 15 tables and 25 figures. The achieved scientific results are correctly reflected, visualized and summarized.

### **4. Discussion of the results and used literature.**

Based on a well-structured theoretical and analytical work on the obtained results, the doctoral student formulates logically justified conclusions and strategic guidelines for the improvement of the institutional environment in the context of the tourism industry. This enables the author to objectively interpret the achieved scientific results, constructing an extremely valuable for the theory and practically applicable scientific work. The literary sources used are 137, 16 of which are in Bulgarian, and 121 in English. The Ph.D. student is familiar with the research problem in detail, as well as modern scientific publications on the topic.

### **5. Contributions of the dissertation work.**

An indisputable contribution that I would like to emphasize is the successful testing of the methodology for measuring transaction costs in tourism, including uncertainty, specificity, and frequency of transactions in TOTAB. Based on it, for the period under review, the conclusion is made that uncertainty and specificity are increasing, and the frequency of transactions is decreasing. The author summarizes that "the introduction of new technologies does not overcome the effect of changes that impose new types and types of transactions". A significant contribution that should be taken into account is the identification of some sources of income from unproductive activities of tour operators and travel agencies, which do not correspond to the main activity, but to some advantages and specifics that they possess. This distorts the reporting of actual income in the industry, and hence naturally leads to the generation of unreliable results from their activities.

#### **Scientific contributions**

1. A methodology for measuring transaction costs in tourism has been adapted and applied, including uncertainty, specificity, and frequency of transactions in TOTAB.

2. The main problems and proposals for improving the institutional environment in order to balance the interests of various stakeholders in tourism in Bulgaria have been outlined;

#### **Scientific-applied contributions**

1. Sources of income from unproductive activities of tour operators and travel agencies in Bulgaria have been identified;

2. Some unregulated practices in the tourism industry have been identified and,

on this basis, practical guidelines and proposals for their limitation and elimination have been derived.

#### **6. Critical remarks and questions.**

I have two remarks: The first is related to the list of literature used. I would like to recommend starting with the Cyrillic one, and then the foreign language one. The second is that at the end of the dissertation I do not find a reference to the scientific contributions of the dissertation work.

#### **7. Published articles and citations.**

The Ph.D. student has presented four scientific publications related to the topic of the dissertation. They reflect part of the results obtained in the dissertation. One publication is self-contained, and the other three are co-authored with the scientific supervisor.

The presented abstract objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Based on the various research methods learned and applied by the doctoral candidate, the correctly conducted experiments, the generalizations and conclusions made, I believe that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the development of the academic staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Agrarian University for its application, which gives me reason to evaluate it **POSITIVELY**.

I would like to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to also vote positively and award **Ivanka Dimitrova Dimitrova** the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in: field of higher education: **3. Economic, social and legal sciences**, professional field: **3.8 Economics**, scientific specialty: **Economics and management (agriculture)**.

**Date:** 04.02.2025  
Plovdiv

#### **PREPARED BY OPINION:**

Подписите в този документ са заличени

във връзка с чл.4, т.1 от Регламент (ЕС) 2016/679

(Общ Регламент относно защитата на данни).