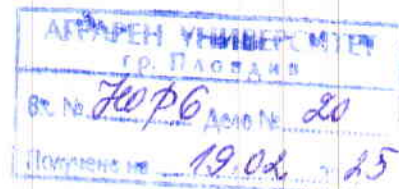


# OPINION



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

Author of the dissertation: Ivanka Dimitrova Dimitrova  
Full-time doctoral student at the Department of Economics at the Agrarian University, Plovdiv

Topic of the dissertation: Institutional problems and challenges of tour operator and agent activities

Reviewer: Professor Dr. Hrabrin Ianuchev Bachev, from the Institute of Agrarian Economics, Sofia, field of higher education Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty Economics and management (agriculture), appointed as a member of the Scientific jury by order No. RD-16-1430/20.12.2024. from the Rector of the Agrarian University.

## **1. Relevance of the problem.**

The dissertation is on one of the most topical and at the same time most discussed and still incompletely developed issues of economic theory and practice – assessment of the institutional structure and factors of tour operator and travel agent activity. There are no similar in-depth studies in this important area in the country, and there are few internationally.

## **2. Goal, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.**

The goal, tasks and hypotheses of the study are well formulated. Appropriate modern scientific methods such as qualitative, comparative and discrete structural analysis of the specific institutional structure in the country have been adapted. "Modern" categories of modern economic analysis such as institutional environment, governance, transaction costs, bounded rationality, opportunism, rent seeking, etc. are also well used.

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

A huge volume of scientific, official, expert, primary, statistical, etc. data has been collected and processed. The results obtained are adequately presented in a variety of and a large number of figures and tables – 39.

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

The collected information and the results obtained are thoroughly analyzed and correctly interpreted. Numerous academic publications, reports, official documents, etc. in the thematic area have been studied, critically analyzed and appropriately used, most of which are in English.

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

### **Scientific contributions**

Based on a thorough critical analysis of the development of theories and practices of institutional development, theoretical and methodological framework for understanding, analysis and assessment of the institutional structure of the tour operator and travel agent industry in the country have been developed. An original author's approach "benchmarking" is also proposed for a more accurate assessment and practical improvement of the effectiveness of tourism organizations in the country.

### **Scientific and applied contributions**

For the first time, a holistic analysis and assessment of the institutional environment and the governance structure of the tour operator and travel agent industry in the country is made, and its critical factors identified, transaction costs measured, and trends in development outlined. A method of data collection through personal participation in the processes related to tourism activity is applied. Valuable conclusions and recommendations are made for improving the regulatory framework and organization of tourism activity at the modern stage of development. The main goal and the tasks of the study have been successfully fulfilled, and the thesis of the dissertation and the research hypotheses have been proven or rejected.

## **6. Critical notes and questions.**

The author's understanding of the main categories of institutional analysis such as governance, institutions, organizations, property rights, transactions and transaction costs, etc. is not clearly stated.

There are incorrect statements and unclear categories such as "specificity, frequency and uncertainty of assets" (p. 8, 57), "institutions adapt to institutional changes" (p. 10), "institutional hybridization" (p. 12), "institutions change as a result of changes in relative prices" (p. 14), "free rider is an effect in which the system of rules has directed the institutions that have influenced one to pay the costs and another to receive the benefits" (p. 15), "the concept of transaction costs was introduced by Coase, although he uses the term "social costs" (p. 28), "opportunistic costs" (p. 35), "moral risk" (p. 37), "adverse selection" [„обратен подбор" (p. 37), "measuring the number of institutions" (p. 49). "asymmetric information is among the main driving forces of social, economic and political processes" (p. 55), "normatively determined transaction costs" (p. 59), "costs of opportunism" (p. 59), "adaptation of institutions" (p. 110), property costs are identified with property rights (p. 9, 28).

The analysis is limited only to formal institutions and organizations, and to a small part of the "external" transaction costs (fees, etc.).

The introduction indicates methods that are not used in the study (statistical and mathematical), and the research hypotheses are formulated not at the beginning of the dissertation, but on page 53.

I would like to emphasize that the critical remarks do not underestimate the scientific achievements and contributions of the dissertation work, but rather prove the complexity of the assessment of institutional analysis in general and in the research area in particular.

**Questions:** a/ Why are there different types of organizations (tour operators, travel agents, etc.) in the tourism industry?

b/ Do institutions, the state, and private and collective organizations have economic significance in the absence of transaction costs?

c/ Can you point to one specific example of an important institution, governance structure, and organization in connection with the identified "problems" of this sector in the country?

I recommend that the doctoral student publish the work as a monograph in Bulgarian and English, given its relevance and high scientific and practical importance, and also to continue and deepen her research in this dynamically developing and important field for science and practice.

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

Four scientific publications have been made, three of which in English, all of which well present the main results of the dissertation work in prestigious academic journals. The presented persecutive summary objectively present the structure and content of the dissertation work.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Based on the various research methods learned and applied by the doctoral student, the correctly conducted experiments, the generalizations and conclusions made, I believe that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on Agricultural Research and Development 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 that the esteemed Scientific Jury to vote positively and award Ivanka Dimitrova Dimitrova the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" in the scientific specialty of Economics and Management (Agriculture)

Подписите в този документ са заличени

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Date: 10.02.25.  
Plovdiv