

бр. № 781 / от 10. 2021

STATEMENT

on the dissertation FLEXIBILITY AND INSECURITY (Sociological analysis of work and employment in Bulgaria 1989 - 2019)

Author of the Dissertation: Vassil Nikolaev Kirov

Author of the Statement: Prof. D.Sc. Tzvetan Davidkov, on the basis of the Order of the Director of IFS RD 09-348 / 27.07.2021 for a member of the jury.

The text, subject of this opinion, is a dissertation for the degree of "Doctor of Science", Professional field 3.1. "Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences" (Scientific specialty "Sociology"). The author is an established scholar who has been researching the sociological aspects of the labour market for more than two decades.

Brief description and evaluation of the dissertation. The topic is fertile for dissertation research at this level. The structure of the text (introduction, six chapters, appendices, bibliography) allows for the conceptualization and unfolding of the research, for its logical presentation. The author explores the field of labour and employment in Bulgaria and other countries "long enough" - this gives the dissertation research scale and increases its significance.

My overall assessment of the dissertation is positive. The main argument is that the work presented is comprehensive and complete, with a tendency towards a monograph. It "covers" a period of three decades - a period of intense changes in the economic situation with the resulting and accompanying changes in the labour market, regulations, "players" with their specific interests and strategies, etc. It can be shown that the stated objective and its concretizations - to analyse the specific development of labour flexibility and employment in Bulgaria during... (abstract, pp. 9-10) have been achieved. The research tasks (which set the research field as an intersection of different contexts) have been correctly fulfilled. The study of flexibility, security, quality and other characteristics of work, based on different

referents is - in my opinion - one of the most important merits of the dissertation research. These different contexts are - as a rule - deployed in different structural parts of the text.

An important distinction in interpreting flexibility, security and quality of work is "who does it benefit?" As this question is often overlooked, its posing and interpretation is important.

On a positive note, the author has taken on board many of the recommendations made during the preliminary discussion. This - in my opinion - has contributed to the conceptual 'clean-up' of the text and has enhanced its overall quality¹.

Assessment of Scientific Contributions. The request for scientific contributions (Abstract, pp. 44-45) is generally defensible. The results of the dissertation research have: a) theoretical and cognitive value; b) applied value; c) specific independent value for the development of sociology of work and frontier fields of sociological knowledge. Between these three levels there are 'transitions' that can be indicated in the text.

The author has submitted a list of 23 publications on the topic of the thesis. Some of the publications are co-authored - separation protocols have been submitted for these publications. The majority of the publications are in English (this is understandable given the fact that a significant number of them are the result of international projects). The publications present the essential aspects and results of the research and satisfy the requirements for publication activity *at the level of Doctor of Science*.

The abstract adequately presents the structure and content of the overall dissertation. However, in order to fully and thoroughly comprehend the conception and its execution, the entire dissertation must be read.

Critical Notes. In the spirit of review style, I make the following disclaimer: the following comments and recommendations are for future possible improvements - they do not call into question the value and merits of the dissertation.

- In the creation of a conceptual text based on research of a more limited and private nature (realized at points in time over an extended period of time), there is usually a difficulty with "putting the puzzle together". The case is similar, and the evaluation of the "whole" presupposes knowledge of other

¹ I consider as a plus the fact that "weak state" has been dropped from the title of the dissertation - thus the content of the text corresponds to a greater extent to what is stated in the title.

publications of the author that are not used more extensively in the text of the thesis (they are mentioned; they are referred to). This approach makes the systematic construction of the 'body of research' difficult and affects the integrity and completeness of the dissertation research.

- During the preliminary discussion of the text, the question was raised *how to write for a Bulgarian audience and how to write for audiences abroad* (e.g. in Western Europe). The author's participation in international research teams and writing mainly for *audiences abroad* has put a certain imprint on the author's style. A stricter adherence to *the say-prove style*² would - in my opinion - contribute to a stronger scientific persuasiveness.

Question: to the extent that one of the differentiators for types of flexibility is along the quantity-quality line (numerical vs functional flexibility), what are the possibilities for synthesizing these categories? Could flexibility analysis take a "step forward" if a regular relationship between varieties of one (numerical) and varieties of the other (functional) flexibility were demonstrated?

The above-mentioned opinion and considering the overall scientific, publishing and other public activities of my colleague Vasil Kirov, gives me grounds to draw the following **conclusion:** the presented dissertation has the necessary qualities to be defended as a dissertation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science in the Professional field 3.1. "Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences" (Scientific specialty "Sociology"). I will support the decision of the scientific jury to this effect.

Sofia, 05 October 2021

Signature:

(Prof. D. Sc. Tsvetan Davidkov)

² On account of style I say.