

## REVIEW

From Professor Dr. Dimitre Nikolov Nikolov, Institute of Agrarian Economics, in the professional field 3.8. Economics

With candidate Vanya Ivanova Bankova, PhD student of independent preparation in the doctoral program "Organization and management of the non-productive sphere (public administration)" - NBU, with the topic of the dissertation "Characteristics, functional imbalances and potential for rural development in the Republic of Bulgaria in the context of membership in the European Union", for obtaining an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in a professional field: 3.7 Administration and management, scientific specialty Organization and management of the non-production sphere (public administration).

### **1. Significance of the researched problem in scientific and scientific-applied relation.**

The relevance of the topic of the dissertation can be considered in several ways. In the first place, these are the disparities in rural development as a result of the implementation of horizontal and sectoral policies. The process of eliminating these disparities is associated with a number of challenges related to stimulating economic growth, employment and sustainability. On the other hand, the issue of catching up with the development of these areas with other similar areas within the European Union is on the agenda.

The process of catching up is too complex and complex, which necessitates the adoption of sustainable strategies in line with our social development and economic satisfaction, which will also lead to overcoming the significant differences between rural and urban areas in almost all spheres of life. .

The dissertation contains an introduction, a three-chapter presentation and a conclusion. It has a total volume of 221 standard typewritten pages. 118 sources of information in Bulgarian and 58 sources in a foreign language were used. The text includes 13 tables, 11 diagrams and 1 figure. There are 9 appendices to the dissertation in tabular form.

### **2. Accurately formulated goals and objectives of the dissertation.**

The purpose of the study is defined precisely and clearly and is aimed at studying the characteristics and functional imbalances of rural areas in the Republic of Bulgaria based on historical analysis and as a result will define the areas of socio-economic life with the greatest potential for development of these areas. The object of the research in the presented dissertation are the rural areas in the context of their economic, social, ecological and cultural development. Additionally, the dissertation analyzes the differences in the potential for rural development in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria, as well as in rural and urban areas in our country, in the context of the European policy for balanced and sustainable territorial development. Based on the precisely defined goals of the dissertation, the doctoral student successfully proves the doctoral thesis that the resource potential of rural areas in the Republic of Bulgaria provides opportunities for diversification of the economy in these areas. On the other hand, in order to achieve this goal, an appropriate management model for rural development

should be introduced and priority should be given to investing in areas such as: social infrastructure, construction of mechanisms for ecosystem services, organic farming, natural and cultural tourism, etc.

To achieve this goal, four separate thematic tasks have been developed:

1. Defining the scope of rural areas, as well as the principles, practices and mechanisms in their management;
2. Analysis of the historical development of the rural areas in the Republic of Bulgaria in the period 1878 - 2018 and definition of quantitative and qualitative characteristics of these regions;
3. Analysis and evaluation of European models for realizing the potential of rural areas;
4. Derivation of proposals for overcoming the imbalances in the development of the rural areas in the country and realization of their potential for sustainable and balanced development.

### **3. Evidence that the dissertation was developed independently**

The dissertation correctly points out significant developments of prominent Bulgarian and foreign authors who have studied the development of rural areas, as well as the principles, mechanisms and specifics of this development. The content of the dissertation research is my own author's research, in which on the basis of specific proposals for valorization of the potential of rural areas and the ideas developed by the doctoral student can be applied in practice by political elites, specialists in rural management, experts from the Council of Ministers. , Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, local government, non-governmental sector, etc.

### **4. Degree of knowledge of the state of the problem and correspondence of the used literature.**

The doctoral student shows an in-depth study of the state of the problem and based on the study and analysis of scientific literature on the topic of the dissertation research the main definitions used in the research are clarified, a distinction is made between their scope, scope and use in development and management. of rural areas. As a result of the correct analysis of scientific developments in the researched field, the different models in the development of the rural areas have been studied, the basic principles and practices in their management have been derived.

### **5. Correctness in quoting a representative number of authors.**

The doctoral student cited a sufficient number of authors. In the process of research the doctoral student shows good knowledge of leading authors in the country and abroad on the researched problem. In the dissertation 329 citations of the used literature from 176 sources are made, containing references to literary sources in Bulgarian and foreign language, European and national strategic documents, normative acts, reports, publications, statistical researches, author's notes and others.

### **6. Existence of a substantiated and developed theoretical model of the research.**

The theoretical model used in the study is based on Malcolm Moseley's theory of mechanisms for planning, directing and financing rural development at the local level and that of Prof. Franco Sote and his research on rural development. Specific research methods are applied to this basic. Based on the study and analysis of scientific literature on the topic of the dissertation research, the main definitions used in the study are clarified, a distinction is made between their scope, scope and use in the field of rural development and management. Next are the basic principles and practices in their management.

## **7. Correspondence of the chosen methodology and research methodology with the set goal and tasks of the dissertation.**

Based on the analysis of basic strategic documents, the goals and priorities of the European Union for achieving balanced and sustainable development of rural areas are highlighted and the degree of compliance with them is determined at the national level. The historical analysis makes it possible to study the development of rural areas in the Republic of Bulgaria in a wider period of time. It outlines the direction of rural development in our country during the various periods of its political and economic rule, identifies the factors that have shaped it and outlines the prospects for development in the context of Bulgaria's membership in the European Union.

The comparative analysis of rural development in some EU Member States with similar economic and social indicators allows for an in-depth study of similar countries in terms of structure and resource potential, which, however, follow different models for sustainable rural development.

Last but not least, inductive and deductive methods of analysis have been used to outline the causal links for the imbalances in the development of rural areas in the Republic of Bulgaria and to form summaries and recommendations for achieving sustainability in the development of these areas.

## **8. Existence of own contribution to the collection and analysis of empirical data.**

In the process of research the analytical author's conclusions and assessments are noticed everywhere. In her work the doctoral student has used a wide range of sources: books, monographs, scientific articles, reports, strategic documents of the European Union (current and repealed), regulations, national strategic documents, regulations, investment programs, official and specialized sites and Internet platforms. in the field of rural development. Research by Bulgarian and foreign experts in the field of rural development has been used to prove the research thesis.

118 sources of information in Bulgarian and 58 sources in a foreign language were used. The text includes 13 tables, 11 diagrams, 1 figure and 9 appendices in tabular form.

## **9. Description of contributions:**

### **9.1. Brief description of the nature and assessment of the authenticity of the material on which the contributions of the dissertation are based.**

In the historical analysis for some of the indicators, where an analysis of the entire period covered by the study (1878 - 2018) is not explicitly required, data for shorter time periods are used, and where quantitative data are not available, a logical analysis.

In the framework of the comparative analysis of the countries analyzed in Chapter Two of the dissertation, the considered time period covers the years from their accession to the European Union until 2018;

In the analysis of rural development, agriculture is considered in correlation and in many cases their development is identified with it. The reason for this is rooted in the nature of the agricultural sector and its impact on the ecology and socio-economic development of these areas. The main emphasis in the study of management models and development policies at the national level is placed on the National Strategy for Regional Development of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2012-2022 and the National Concept for Spatial Development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2013 - 2025 in order to define imbalances at the regional level.

The attached reference for the contributions in the dissertation work correctly reflects the results of the doctoral student. The contributing moments of the dissertation can be grouped into two groups:

- **Theoretical contributions**

- Based on the theoretical analysis, the PhD student has developed a working definition that characterizes the development of rural areas as a process, the course of which depends on a number of constant factors such as: geographical location, climate, natural resources, etc., and many interventions.

- In addition, a new principle has been formulated relating to rural development at local level, tentatively called "Modeling". Its essence concerns the borrowing of already yielded models, taking into account vectors such as geographical location, climate, economic indicators of the region, human resources, etc. and their implementation in practice. The principle aims to achieve positive results without losing valuable resources for planning, testing and evaluation.

- **Applied contributions**

- Specific measures have been identified and a proposal has been made to implement a territorially based integrated approach to rural development policy. The application of this approach guarantees the partial or complete achievement of the coherence and synergy of the policies in the different economic and social spheres, accumulating stronger impact and higher added value;

- Two main priorities in the development of rural areas have been identified - investments in infrastructure and investments in human capital. A proposal has been made for the development and implementation of an investment program to ensure economic and social stability in rural areas.

- Alternative measures for impact on the negative demographic trends in rural areas in the Republic of Bulgaria are proposed: exemption from real estate tax and tax on household waste at the birth of a

second / third child, to parents with a permanent address in a rural area; exemption from kindergarten fee; percentage reduction of the interest rate on investment loans for investments in rural areas; provision of state lands for industrial construction in rural areas, etc.

- The following priorities for the development of rural areas are outlined - the development of natural and cultural tourism and organic farming.

- The need for amendments to specific normative acts aimed at removing certain normative obstacles, which hinder the consolidation of land properties and investments in rural areas, complicate the planning and management of the territory, hinder the development of the process of association of local authorities and demotivate civic participation in rural development processes.

### **9.2. Assessment of the degree of personal participation of the dissertation in the contributions.**

In conclusion, I will note that the developments, conclusions and recommendations contained in the dissertation are the personal work of the doctoral student and reflect the specific results of his work. The applied complex approach of the scientific analysis, as well as the content of the developed scientific-applied problems in the second and third part of the dissertation are proof that the doctoral student can conduct independent scientific research and logically interpret its results.

### **9.3. Assessment of the correspondence of the author's abstract with the main positions and the contributions of the dissertation work.**

The abstract of the dissertation corresponds to the content of the dissertation.

## **10. Impacts of the dissertation work on the external environment.**

### **10.1. Evaluation of the publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they are published.**

The dissertation has presented three publications related to the dissertation, of which all three are independent scientific publications related to the dissertation. The first independent publication is in the Yearbook of the Department of Public Administration of the New Bulgarian University (NBU), Volume 8, ISSN 1313-476, October 2013 - 18 pages (scientific article). The article is also published on the website of the Public Administration Department of NBU, available on the Internet address:

[http://ebox.nbu.bg/pa2013/4\\_V.Bankova.pdf](http://ebox.nbu.bg/pa2013/4_V.Bankova.pdf). The second article was published in the Yearbook of the Department of Public Administration of the New Bulgarian University (NBU), Volume 9, ISSN 1313-476, October 2014 - 11 pages (scientific article). The article is also published on the website of the Public Administration Department of NBU, available at: [http://ebox.nbu.bg/pa2014/4\\_V.Bankova.pdf](http://ebox.nbu.bg/pa2014/4_V.Bankova.pdf) The third article is published in the Yearbook of the Department of Administration and Management of New Bulgarian University (NBU), Volume 4, ISSN 2603-297X, October 2019 - 22 pages (scientific study). The study is also published on the website of the Central and Eastern European Online Library, available at: <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=828458>

### **10.2. Use and citation by other authors, reviews in the scientific press, etc.**

No data available.

Personal qualities of the author (if the reviewer knows him).

### **11. Opinions, recommendations and notes.**

A specific study of the development of two or more rural areas based on a system of indicators can be added to the dissertation. Such a study is recommended for the doctoral student, in which he can practically apply the developed methodological approach.

### **12. Conclusion**

All this gives me reason to propose to the Scientific Jury to vote positively for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Vanya Ivanova Bankova, PhD student in self-study in the doctoral program "Organization and management of non-production sphere (public administration)" - NBU, with the topic of the dissertation "Characteristics, functional imbalances and potential for rural development in the Republic of Bulgaria in the context of membership in the European Union", for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field: 3.7 Administration and management, scientific specialty Organization and management of the non-production sphere (public administration).

12/08/2020

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Bankova', written over a horizontal line.