

REVIEW

by: **Assoc. Prof. Zornitsa Dimova Stoyanova, Ph.D.**

University of National and World Economy, Department of Economics of Natural Resources
Scientific specialty" Economics and Management (Agricultural Management)"

Subject: dissertation work for the award of "**doctor**" academic and scientific degree
In the Ph.D. programme of "Economics and Management (Agricultural Economics)"

Grounds for presenting the review: participation in the scientific jury for the defence of the dissertation work pursuant to Order No. 1043/02.12.2021 of the Rector of "D.A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics, Svishtov

Author of dissertation: Rosen Kostadinov Kotsev

Dissertation thesis: Fluctuations of the development of rural areas in Bulgaria

I. General Presentation of Dissertation

The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defence under the provisions of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria by the Department of Agricultural Economics at the Academy of Economics "Dimitar A. Tsenov" - Svishtov. In terms of content, it consists of an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, and a conclusion.

1. **Object** - rural areas with their specificities, differences, fluctuations and concrete results reflecting the implementation of the different measures of the Rural Development Programme.

2. **Subject** - the manifested and emerging fluctuations in rural areas of Bulgaria under the influence of various factors.

3. **Volume** – The dissertation covers 177 pages.

4. **Structure** – The structure of the dissertation contains an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, and a conclusion.

5. **Literature used** - The reference list contains 114 sources, of which 44 in Cyrillic, 32 in Latin, 22 normative documents and 16 internet sources.

6. **Appendices** – There are four appendices covering 10 pages.

II. Assessment of the dissertation format and content.

1. **Assessment of the topicality and elaboration of the research problem studied in the dissertation and formulated: subject and object, doctoral thesis, research objectives, tasks and research methods, clarity and argumentation of ideas, outlining the novelties.**

The main objective of the dissertation is to analyse the state of and potential for the development of rural areas in the context of overcoming fluctuations therein.

In order to achieve the above objective, the following research tasks are set for the dissertation, which are related to:

- To derive the theoretical foundations of the concept of "rural areas" and to conduct a comparative analysis of the concept of "rural area" in different EU countries;
- To analyse the characteristics and general situation of rural areas and, on this basis, to identify the main problems to be solved;
- To characterise the EU CAP and analyse the specificities of its implementation in Bulgaria;
- To analyse the implementation and results of the RDP 2007-2013 and RDP 2014-2020 measures in Bulgaria.

The thesis of the dissertation is aimed at proving the assertion that based on the identified differences in the development and socio-economic status of rural areas in the Republic of Bulgaria, illustrated through specific data, to justify the role of the Common Agricultural Policy and the European funds in overcoming the fluctuations between and within rural areas and to analyse their role as a development factor of rural areas as a whole.

The thesis tests four hypotheses directly related to the main thesis. These are aimed at confirming or rejecting the claims that:

- Inequalities in the development of individual rural areas are linked to the specificities of the natural-geographical complex and rural locations;
- Inequalities in the development of individual rural areas are affected by insufficiently effective measures under rural development programmes;
- Inequalities in the development of individual rural areas are due to inefficient management of EU funds;
- Inequalities in the development of individual rural areas are due to ineffective regional and local policies that do not support the development and exploitation of the potential of these areas.

The main content of the dissertation is presented in three chapters. Chapter one presents the status and potential for the development of rural areas. A section on the theoretical and institutional foundations for rural delimitation is logically included. The problems of development of rural areas in Bulgaria and the RDP as an instrument of the CAP for rural development are presented.

The second chapter is devoted to the preconditions for the occurrence of fluctuations in rural areas. To this end, issues related to the selection of beneficiaries, axes and support measures are presented. This part of the thesis also outlines the problems related to the implementation and enforcement of RDP measures in the first programming period 2007-2013. Similarly, the third paragraph presents the problems related to the implementation and enforcement of the RDP measures in the second programming period 2014-2020.

The third chapter of the dissertation presents the possibilities for overcoming the fluctuations in the development of rural areas. In this chapter, an analysis of the implementation of the implemented RDP admissions is performed, an optimisation of the RDP activities by types of beneficiaries and effects of the program on rural areas is made, and the use of the possibilities

of regional analysis to assess the effects of public support to avoid fluctuations in the development of rural areas in Bulgaria is presented.

All these provide arguments for the need to develop a dissertation on the topic: „Fluctuations of the development of rural areas in Bulgaria”. The results that have been achieved by this work identify major key problems in rural development, and the dissertation also provides specific solutions to overcome the fluctuations in the development of rural areas.

2. Analysis of the degree of elaboration of the studied issues by other scholars and the extent to which the author's own attitude towards the considered issues is reflected.

The paper presents an in-depth review of the existing literature and the authors' opinions on the development of rural areas, highlighting the opinion of PhD student Kotsev on the presented topic related to the identification of problems in rural development. The approach taken by the author enables Rosen Kotsev to present his own views.

3. Opinion on the volume of dissertation work.

The volume of the dissertation - 177 standard pages – meets the requirements for this type of research. The content of the thesis is balanced and the individual chapters are of a size that allows to implement the tasks set in the dissertation and enable the doctoral student Kotsev to reveal his views and ideas.

4. Opinion on the quality and number of the proposed illustrative material - schemes, graphs, tables, etc.

The thesis is suitably illustrated by visualising the research ideas presented. The thesis includes 26 figures and 24 tables. The tabular illustration of statistical data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Eurostat and other institutions is very impressive.

5. Attitude to scientific, linguistic and stylistic editing - consistency of scientific apparatus, presence of deviations, repetitions, logical contradictions, proportionality of parts, etc.;

The dissertation has a scientific style and is written in exquisite economic language. No deviations, repetitions or contradictions are found. The development is balanced and proportionate.

6. Assessment of the correctness and necessity of statistical processing of empirical data - calculation procedures, significant figures, etc.

For the purposes of the scientific research, the author uses traditional scientific research methods, such as: statistical, mathematical, analytical methods, demographic analysis method, comparative analysis. Analysis is performed of data from the State Fund "Agriculture", the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the Information System for Management and Monitoring of EU Funds in Bulgaria 2020, the National Statistical Institute.

7. An opinion on whether the candidate has followed the rules of scientific ethics (incorrect citation of literary sources, publication of the same manuscript in different places, plagiarism, the new problem of "copy-paste" in scientific creativity);

The texts of other authors that are used are correctly cited, a positive point being that the author includes his own interpretation of the author's views. The declaration of originality, signed by the author, guarantees that the work presented is of the author and of an original nature.

8. Opinion on whether the abstract accurately and completely reflects the work.

The abstract correctly reflects the content of the dissertation and contains the necessary logical sequence. It includes the general characteristics of the thesis, the structure and content and a brief outline of the dissertation and the contributions.

III. Scientific and Scientific-Applied Contributions of the Dissertation Thesis.

1. Whether the proposed text develops existing and/or advances new scientific ideas and results with an opinion on their significance.

The following scientific contributions are formulated and found in the thesis:

- ❖ Theoretical formulations related to the status and potential for development of rural areas are enriched.
- ❖ A methodology has been developed to study the problems and fluctuations in the development of rural areas.
- ❖ The main problems related to the selection of beneficiaries, axes and support measures are identified, as well as the problems related to the implementation and execution of the measures under the RDP 2007-2013 and RDP 2014-2020.
- ❖ Practical and applied directions related to the possibilities of overcoming fluctuations in the development of rural areas are developed.

2. Whether there is evidence that the proposed ideas and results have already found resonance and recognition in the specialised literature.

The author has enclosed evidence of the response of his research in the specialised literature. PhD student Kotsev has submitted three publications on his work, which are directly related to the thesis topic and reflect major parts of the thesis. The publications are in the period 2019-2021. Two of them have been presented at international scientific and practical conferences organised by the Academy of Economics of Svishtov and one has been published in the Annual Almanac of Researches of PhD Students of "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov.

IV. Critical Comments, Questions and Recommendations on the Dissertation.

I have a recommendation to the PhD Student Kotsev that the research conducted and the scientific results of the dissertation be formulated as a monographic work, and that the ideas put forward in the dissertation be further developed.

V. Summarised Conclusion and Opinion.

Rosent Kotsev's dissertation is an independent study of a topical problem, developed in depth and containing all the necessary contributions for the required degree. The PhD student shows thorough knowledge in the field of development of rural areas in Bulgaria and the ability to conduct independent scientific research. The dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules on the organisation and conduct of competitions for the acquisition of a scientific degree and for taking academic positions at "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov.

Based on my representations hereinabove, I evaluate positively the work and I propose the distinguished members of the Scientific Jury to take a decision to award the degree of "Doctor" under the Ph.D. programme in Economics and Management (Agricultural Economics) to Rosen Kostadinov Kotsev.

Dated: 04.01.2022

Reviewer:.....
(Assoc. Prof. Zornitsa Stoyanova, Ph.D.)