

## STATEMENT

For Acquiring Doctor's Academic & Research Degree

At "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov

*Statement prepared by:* **Assoc. Prof. Violeta Ivanova Blazheva, Ph.D.**,  
Department of Agricultural Economics at "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics –  
Svishtov, scientific specialty "Economics and Management" (Agricultural Economics)

*Subject:* dissertation for the award of Doctor's Academic and Scientific Degree  
under the doctoral programme of Economics and Management (Agricultural Economics)

*Author of dissertation:* **Rosen Kostadinov Kotsev**, part-time Ph.D. student with  
the Department of Agricultural Economics at "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics –  
Svishtov

*Dissertation thesis:* „**Fluctuations of the development of rural areas in  
Bulgaria**”

*Grounds for submitting the statement:* Rules on the Development of the Academic  
Staff at "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics pursuant to Order No. 1043/02.12.2021.

### **I. General Presentation of Dissertation**

The dissertation of Rosen Kotsev with a thesis "Fluctuations of the development  
of rural areas in Bulgaria" is a thorough research.

1. The *subject* of study and analysis in the dissertation are the manifested and  
occurring fluctuations in the rural areas of the Republic of Bulgaria under the influence of  
various factors, including in the context of the implementation and impact of the Rural  
Development Programme with the corresponding measures and axes, on the development  
of rural areas, its stimulation, expansion of the scope of beneficiary entities and rational  
use of funding to achieve optimal results, both in the development of rural areas and in  
the development of agricultural sector and the planning regions.

2. The dissertation consists of total of 177 pages and covers a table of contents (2  
p.), abbreviations (2 p.), introduction (4 p.), three chapters (140 p. in total), conclusion (4  
p.), 114 sources used, appendices (10 p.) and a declaration of originality and reliability (1  
p.). The main text includes 24 tables and 26 figures.

3. *Structurally*, the introduction of the dissertation presents the following: the  
importance of the study, the main objective of the dissertation, the main tasks to achieve  
the set objective, the subject of study and analysis in the dissertation, the object of study,  
the main thesis of the study, 4 hypotheses, research methods, limiting parameters of the  
study. The exposition presents the theoretical-empirical framework of the research.  
Conclusion. Appendices.

4. The list of *sources used* based on which the research is conducted numbers 114  
((76, of which 44 are in Bulgarian (Cyrillic) and 32 in Latin); 22 normative sources and  
16 internet sources)).

5. There are four *appendices* in the form of 4 tables.

### **II. Assessment of the dissertation format and content**

1. *Assessment of the topicality and elaboration of the research problem studied in the dissertation* – The problem explored in this dissertation is essential for the economic theory and practice. An attempt has been made for an in-depth study of the mentioned problem by the author. For this purpose, various information sources have been used.

2. *Opinion on the language, volume and tools of the dissertation* - The research conducted is important for theory and for agribusiness. In terms of structure, the research observes the consistency of the content. The exposition meets the basic requirements for this type of work.

*Chapter One* (pp. 10-54) is theoretical and expository in nature. This chapter is structured in three points. It clarifies the substantive characteristic of the term rural area. A literature review of foreign and Bulgarian terminology of the term "rural area" is made. The following inconsistency is noteworthy: on p. 20 it is stated that, I quote: "According to this definition 231 out of 264 municipalities in Bulgaria are classified as rural. These rural areas cover 81% of the territory and 42% of the population.", and on p. 48, I quote: "According to this definition 232 out of 265 municipalities in our country are classified as rural. They occupy 81% of its territory and cover 39% of its population". The abbreviation "Leader" explained on p. 52 is further clarified on p. 95.

*Chapter Two* (pp. 50-104) studies the problems in the development of rural areas. Priority attention is focused on the Rural Development Programme, and more specifically on "the two programme periods 2008-2013 and 2014-2020", the first of which is "divided into three separate sub-periods, respectively 2008-2010, 2011-2012 and 2013-2014". It is not clear why the year of the first programming period is not 2007 but 2008, and why the first period is divided into three sub-periods? Structurally, the chapter consists of three sections, respectively 29 pages, 13 pages and 8 pages. This imbalance is also the result of the large tables of three pages each 2.2., 2.3., 2.4. and 2.5. - two pages, which could have been successfully displayed in the appendices. Also a repetition of text was found: on p. 52 and p. 57 regarding axes. The text, I quote: "We would like to clarify that at this stage we are only discussing the speed of implementation of the individual measures, and later, in the next paragraph of the chapter, we will analyse what is the percentage of implementation of the set objectives" - p. 63, also requires further precision in terms of the concepts presented, including the figures presented, illustrating the percentage of funds spent. Relevant gaps and inaccuracies are noted, for example in figures (2.4., 2.14., etc.) and tables (2.8., 2.11., etc.).

*Chapter Three* (pp. 85-135) analyses the implementation of the RDP 2014-2020. Data are presented to support the problem discussed. In general, the work lacks reference to tables and figures to the specific text. It would also be appropriate to specify the period of the study in the introductory part, including with regard to the tables and figures in chapter three, as well as a corresponding substantiation and argumentation for the research methodology. The text on p. 125 overlaps with that on pp. 103-104. Other texts, or figures and tables, requiring specificity and substantiation are also identified - for example, Figure 3.7. Immediately prior to the end of chapter three, a clarification is made that, I quote: "economic-statistical methods were used in the exposition of the dissertation" - p. 148. A brief description of the modelling is given. The active use of the method of regional analysis is suggested.

The doctoral student's effort to develop the problems deserves a positive evaluation.



3. *Opinion on how accurately and completely the abstract reflects the thesis* - The abstract, in total volume of 37 pages, in structural terms contains: the grounds for referring the dissertation for defence, general characteristics of the dissertation - 4 pages, structure of the dissertation - 2 pages, synthesised presentation of the dissertation - 24 pages, conclusion - 2 p., reference to the contributions and achievements in the dissertation - 1 p., list of publications related to the topic of the dissertation (1 p.) - 1 article and 2 reports, declaration of originality of the dissertation - 1 p. The abstract reflects the structure and content of the dissertation proposed for defence.

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

The main merits of the dissertation work are outlined as research contributions in the abstract, and namely:

*First.* A thorough, well-founded and substantiated author's analysis of the data set for the first and second programming periods using the tool of statistical, economic-statistical, demographic and other analyses.

*Second.* Authors' assessments of the need for effective use of the RDP measures to overcome the fluctuations and inequalities in the rural areas of the Republic of Bulgaria.

*Third.* Substantiation with concrete proposals and measures of the need for a more effective, dynamic and targeted use of the RDP instruments to overcome fluctuations in the different programming periods and in the future in order to reduce the role of fluctuations as a negative factor restricting the sustainable development of rural areas in the Republic of Bulgaria.

*Fourth.* Substantiation of the need to use and apply the methods of regional analysis, including regional risk analysis and regional investment analysis, as well as mathematical modelling on a regional scale to support the processes of overcoming fluctuations in rural areas and making optimal decisions to select the most appropriate options for achieving high efficiency of the use of EU structural funds in these areas, by carrying out optimisation selection of relevant measures.

### **IV. Critical Notes, Questions and Recommendations on the Dissertation**

Regarding the research development, I would like to give the following recommendations:

1. It is advisable for the author to further outline his position, elaborating on the listed findings:

I quote: „We can hardly expect to solve the problems faced by Bulgarian agriculture only by implementing the measures adopted in the Common Agricultural Policy” – p. 44.

I quote: „On the basis of the analysis of the implementation of the objectives and measures of the RDP 2007-2013, we can point out that, in general terms, Bulgaria supports the reform directives expressed by the Commission”. – p.51.

I quote: „It is interesting to note that the pre-established average amount of investment per beneficiary under the measure is EUR 49,000, while in reality the approved applications for support are worth EUR 250,400, i.e. 5 times more than foreseen.” – p. 94.

I quote: „In this sense, there is a need to create a differentiated methodology to

take into account the specific characteristics of the different rural areas and to assess the fluctuations that occur in them.” – p. 142.

2. The dissertation would benefit from elaborating and further developing the idea in the last third point at the end of chapter three.

I quote: „An important starting point in the analysis process is the selection of appropriate approaches and methods for defining performance indicators for the rural area concerned.” – p. 147.

I would like the PhD student to answer the following *questions*:

1. What way, I quote: „Other negative impacts of non-competitiveness of pure public services hamper market functioning and lead to over-utilisation of public services, gratification, constraints in optimal deployment and resource degradation" - p. 48, correspond with the fluctuations in the development of rural areas in Bulgaria?

2. Based on the problems studied, I quote: „In this thesis we will analyse the spending of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). However, in support of these activities it is also possible to apply for programmes from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund, the European Fisheries Fund and the state budget." p.56, are there other sources of rural support, too?

Despite the above comments and recommendations, the dissertation has merits for this kind of research. The author as a whole manages to cover the specifics and problems of rural areas in Bulgaria.

#### **V. Summarised evaluation of the dissertation and conclusion**

The dissertation presented by Ph.D. student Rosen Kostadinov Kotsev on the topic "Fluctuations of the development of rural areas in Bulgaria" represents a comprehensive and complete scientific study on a topical and significant issue for economic theory and practice. In its entirety, the dissertation meets the requirements for the award of the academic and scientific degree of Doctor in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing regulations. This gives me grounds to submit a positive assessment and to propose to the Honourable Jury to award Rosen Kostadinov Kotsev the academic and scientific degree of Doctor in the professional field 3.8. Economics, in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agricultural Economics)".

05.01.2022

Svishtov

Statement prepared by:

(Assoc. Prof. V. Blazheva, Ph.D.)