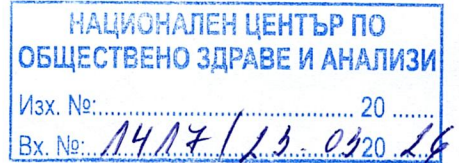


REVIEW



by Prof. Dr. Todor Dimitrov Cherkezov, MD, PhD

Medical University-Sofia

external member of the scientific jury

According to Order No. RD-93 / 24.02.2026 of the Director of the National Center for the Health and Welfare of the Republic of Bulgaria on the basis of Art. 4, para. 3, item 6 and Art. 19, para. 1 of the Regulations on the structure and activities of the National Center for the Health and Welfare of the Republic of Bulgaria in connection with Art. 30, para. 2 and para. 3 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (PPZRASRB) and Art. 69, para. 1 and para. 2, sentence 2 of the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions in the National Center for the Health and Welfare of the Republic of Bulgaria and decision of the National Council of the National Center for the Health and Welfare of the Republic of Bulgaria (Minutes No. 12/18.02.2026)

regarding a dissertation on the topic:

**Palliative and geriatric care in Bulgaria in the context of
EU health policies**

with author:

Alexandra Zdravkova Karamiteva-Doncheva

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR"
in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management"

scientific supervisor:

Assoc. Prof. Natashka Dakeva Danova, MD, PhD

The review was prepared in accordance with the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Terms and Procedure for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions in the National Center for Health and Social Care

Brief information about the author of the dissertation:

Alexandra Zdravkova Karamiteva-Doncheva graduated from the "Hristo Botev" High School for Teaching Foreign Languages in the town of Kardzhali in 2008. She continued her education at the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad and in 2014 graduated as a Master of Law. In 2024-2025, she is a doctoral student in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management". She has completed certification training for mediators - ISK at the UNWE-Sofia.

Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva's professional experience is significant and diverse. After obtaining her higher education, she was a law intern in a private bailiff's office. For three years, she was a sales manager for Sofia region at Brainstorm Web Design Group OOD, and subsequently a lawyer at Tokuda Hospital. From 2017 to 2024, she was successively a senior legal advisor and chief legal advisor of the Ministry of Health. She has significant experience in the field of international cooperation and in the implementation of joint activities of the Ministry of Health with European institutions in the field of health, as well as in the implementation of WHO policies and initiatives in our country. Since 2024, she has been Head of the "EU and OECD" Department in the "European Coordination and International Cooperation" Directorate at the Ministry of Health. Her work is related to coordinating the process of legal harmonization of Bulgarian legislation with the secondary EU law in the field of health. Deputy Head of Working Group 22 "Health" at the Council for European Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva is a certified mediator at the Ministry of Justice. Member of the Network of Young Leaders in Public Administration of Bulgaria, of the Network of Young Leaders in WHO, of the Network for Innovators in Public Administration. Representative of Bulgaria in the OECD Expert Group on Economics in the Field of Public Health.

Fluent in English and German.

1. General characteristics of the presented dissertation work

The presented dissertation work of Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva is 131 standard pages long and is structured as follows: introduction; literature review, which provides a good theoretical foundation for the study; methodology, which objectively outlines the design of the study; presentation of the results; discussion of the results; conclusion; conclusions; recommendations; contributions. The bibliography includes 123 literary sources. The individual structural elements are logically interconnected and fully reveal the author's vision of the topic under consideration, based on the literature review and his own observations and studies. The development is illustrated with 3 tables, 4 figures and 2 appendices. In terms of structure and technical layout, the dissertation work fully meets the scientific requirements.

2. Assessment of the relevance of the topic

The presented dissertation concerns a relevant and significant topic in the field of European and national health and social policy - the growing need for palliative and geriatric care and the practical lag in their supply in the face of increased consumer demand. The dissertation is built on extensive material, which is sufficient to formulate ideas for the management, financing and development of access and efficiency of healthcare. The development also has its practical contribution through the presented analysis of the experience and practices in some of the EU Member States, as well as the training program "Fundamentals of Palliative and Geriatric Care" developed in it. The author of the dissertation has approached the clarification of the issues based on his good knowledge of European and national legislation in combination with the theoretical knowledge acquired from the indicated literary sources and observations in practice.

3. Evaluation of the literature review

The introduction to the dissertation work justifies the relevance and significance of the chosen topic. In the face of serious demographic problems in Europe and Bulgaria, the ideas and policies of the EU that every citizen should have guaranteed access to quality healthcare and care throughout life are of utmost importance. But in reality, both in Europe and in our country, a deficit of specific measurable measures is established.

The literature review is distinguished by its in-depth elucidation of the topic - richly presented with a review of European and Bulgarian legislation and regulatory framework related to the issues considered in the scientific work. The review of the actual situation on the discrete health policy issues raised in the dissertation outlines a number of deficits related to access to palliative care; lack of a specific model of providing geriatric care and a strategic approach in

thinking and action. A number of needs have been identified to improve the interaction between the health and social sectors, reduce the administrative burden on the patient and his family, introduce a new scientific specialty "palliative medicine" and include palliative care in the National Health Strategy, in order to ensure resource provision and fulfillment of the quality criteria for this type of health services.

4. Evaluation of the goal, tasks and methodology

The goal of the dissertation is clearly formulated. Four supporting points have been set for assessing access to palliative and geriatric care in Bulgaria in the context of European health policy. The doctoral student has set himself six tasks, which have been successfully completed. They are precisely formulated and aimed at achieving the main goal of the dissertation, and the methodology is consistent with them. The object, subject and units of the study have been correctly defined, the time and place of the study have been indicated. As a foundation for the working hypothesis, significant problems and possible approaches to solving them have been set. In the course of the study, mainly sociological methods have been used - documentary and survey, and an original questionnaire with seven open questions has been prepared for this purpose.

5. Assessment of the results of the study

Studies on the policies and competences of the EU in the health and social spheres are presented. The topic of universal health coverage and the measures to achieve it in the EU and in Bulgaria is presented in detail. The need for geriatric care and the competences of those dedicated to palliative care are studied and analyzed in detail, results of a study of the state of palliative and geriatric care in individual EU member states, including Bulgaria, are presented. The analysis of the results is done with the necessary depth and competence, which is a prerequisite for formulating significant conclusions and recommendations.

The conclusions and recommendations follow the logical analysis of the results of the scientific study. In the field of palliative care, 4 conclusions and 7 recommendations were made, and in the field of geriatric care - 7 conclusions and four recommendations. The recommendations by competence are addressed to various institutional units - MH, MLSP, MES, medical universities, professional organizations and the media.

Contributions of the dissertation

1. Of a theoretical-cognitive and methodological nature:

An in-depth and wide-ranging study relating to hospice/palliative care and geriatric care;

Research and analysis of the experience and measures in EU Member States of temporary access to geriatric and palliative care;

Presentation of systematized information on priority topics and documents in the European Health Framework in the health sector;

Quantitative and qualitative dimension of this type of care in our country compared to EU Member States;

Identification of necessary intersectoral measures to expand the scope of access to this type of care.

2. Of a practical-applied nature:

Proposal for practical measures to create a sustainable model for access of Bulgarian patients to palliative and geriatric care;

Comparison of existing gaps and opportunities for working approaches based on a comparative analysis with EU Member States;

A training program "Fundamentals of Palliative and Geriatric Care" has been developed for students in the professional field of "Health Care".

The indicated contributions fully correspond to the in-depth and comprehensive research, faithfully reflecting the importance of the presented dissertation work for the theory and practice of public health and social policy.

Abstract and publications related to the dissertation

The abstract to the dissertation is 55 pages long, correctly reflects the structure of the work and contains the most important results and conclusions from the study. In connection with the topic of the dissertation, Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva has 3 publications.

Conclusion

The proposed dissertation work of Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva on the topic: "Palliative and Geriatric Care in Bulgaria in the Context of EU Health Policies" meets the necessary scientific requirements and criteria of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Terms and Procedure for Acquiring

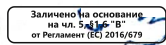
Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions in the National Center for Health and Family Planning.

In connection with all of the above, I give my **positive** assessment and recommend to the members of the esteemed Scientific Jury to award Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in the professional field 7.1. "Medicine" in the scientific specialty "Social Medicine and Health Management".



20.03.2026

Prepared by:



Prof. Dr. Todor Cherkezov, MD, PhD