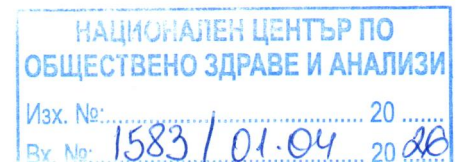


**TO
THE CHAIR OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY
APPOINTED BY ORDER No. RD-93/24.02.2026
OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CENTER OF PUBLIC
HEALTH AND ANALYSES**



OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Virsaviya Stoyanova Vaseva–Chorbadzhiyska, MD, PhD

REGARDING: a dissertation for the acquisition of the PhD degree in “Social Medicine and Health Management” with title “Palliative and Geriatric Care in Bulgaria in the Context of EU Health Policies”, by Alexandra Zdravkova Karamiteva-Doncheva.

The presented dissertation “Palliative and Geriatric Care in Bulgaria in the Context of EU Health Policies” comprises 131 pages and has the following structure: introduction, literature review, methodology, presentation of results, discussion of results, conclusion, conclusions, recommendations, and contributions. The bibliography includes 123 literature sources. The study is illustrated with 3 tables, 4 figures, and 2 appendices. The logical sequence of the exposition is maintained, and the individual parts are well balanced and interconnected.

Topic relevance

The presented dissertation is devoted to an extremely actual and socially significant issue related to the development, organization, and management of palliative and geriatric care in Bulgaria in the context of European health policies.

The topic gains particular importance in the context of the deepening demographic ageing processes, the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, and the growing need for long-term care. The dissertation convincingly highlights the lack of a systematic and integrated approach to end-of-life care, as well as deficiencies in the regulatory framework, financing, and human resource provision in the sector.

The study is in line with the priorities of the European Union related to universal health coverage, quality of life, and reduction of inequalities in healthcare, which further emphasizes its scientific and practical value.

Literature Review

Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva has conducted a comprehensive review of literature sources concerning key aspects of global, European, and national health policies related to palliative and geriatric care. Major strategic documents, initiatives, and EU regulations, as well as national policies and programs, are presented.

Aim and tasks

Based on the conclusions from the comprehensive literature review, Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva formulates the aim of her study: “To assess access to palliative and geriatric care in Bulgaria in the context of European health policies with a view to developing effective approaches for their full integration into the national healthcare system,” with the scope of the assessment clearly defined.

The aim is clearly formulated, and the objectives logically derive from it and are correctly fulfilled:

1. To analyze publications and documents regarding the provision of universal health coverage in the context of access to palliative and geriatric care.
2. To assess the level of implementation at national level of the UN Sustainable Development Goals calling for Universal Health Coverage for all by 2030, in particular the core transformative goal of the UN 2030 Agenda “Leave no one behind”.
3. To study the practices of EU Member States and the measures introduced to improve access to palliative and geriatric care.
4. To analyze the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of national measures to ensure comprehensive access to end-of-life care compared to practices in other EU Member States.
5. To determine the necessary measures to expand access to palliative and geriatric care in Bulgaria and to develop a plan for their overall integration.

6. To identify effective strategies and actions to enhance the competencies of medical and non-medical professionals in palliative and geriatric care, including through the development of a training program.

The object of the study is the identification of specific deficiencies in healthcare provision leading to discrepancies between patient needs and satisfaction with quality healthcare services.

The subject of the study includes EU Member States and the legal and regulatory framework such as clinical standards, regulatory documents, and applied policies and measures for providing palliative and geriatric care.

The doctoral candidate presents her hypothesis regarding insufficiently studied key problems in the organization, financing, and management of palliative and geriatric care in Bulgaria and possible approaches for their resolution.

Materials and Methods

For the period 01.06.2024 to 05.09.2024, a cross-sectional study was conducted through a survey among EU Member States.

Sociological (documentary and survey) methods were used and are appropriate to the objectives set.

Analysis and discussion of the results

Significant scientific results have been achieved in the dissertation.

Particularly valuable is the comparative analysis between the state of palliative and geriatric care in Bulgaria and the practices in EU Member States. On this basis, key problems have been identified, including:

- lack of integration between health and social care
- insufficient funding and limited access to palliative services
- shortage of specialized personnel
- absence of a specialty in “palliative medicine”
- ineffective functioning of hospices as part of the healthcare system

The doctoral candidate convincingly demonstrates that the existing model of care provision is fragmented and does not meet the growing needs of the population.

A significant contribution is the development of proposals for:

- integration of hospice and palliative care into the healthcare system
- improvement of the regulatory and organizational framework
- development of education and training of medical and non-medical specialists
- introduction of sustainable financing models

The proposed training program “Fundamentals of Palliative and Geriatric Care” also has practical value.

It is recommended that the quantitative contribution of the analyses be more clearly highlighted through broader use of statistical methods.

Conclusions, recommendations and contributions

The findings in the dissertation are logically grounded and correspond to the set aim and objectives. They clearly outline the main problems – fragmentation of the system, lack of integration between health and social care, limited access to palliative services, and shortage of personnel.

The recommendations addressed to various institutions are appropriate and practically oriented, focusing on the need for an integrated care model, regulatory improvement, sustainable financing, and development of education.

In summary, the findings and recommendations are consistent, interrelated, and applicable in practice.

Alexandra Karamiteva-Doncheva presents a total of eight contributions (five of theoretical-methodological nature and three of applied nature), which I accept without remarks.

The dissertation is written in correct and clear academic Bulgarian.

The personal contribution and authorship of the candidate in obtaining the results are undeniable.

The abstract accurately reflects the content, results, and contributions of the dissertation.

The candidate presents 3 publications related to the topic.

CONCLUSION

The presented dissertation is a completed, independent scientific study with a clearly formulated aim, properly applied methodology, and significant scientific and applied results.

The candidate demonstrates in-depth knowledge in the field of social medicine and health management, as well as skills for analysis and synthesis of information and the ability to formulate practically applicable solutions.

Based on the above, I consider that the dissertation of Alexandra Zdravkova Karamiteva-Doncheva meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing regulations.

I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Alexandra Zdravkova Karamiteva-Doncheva the PhD degree in “Social Medicine and Health Management”.

Заложено на основание
на чл. 5, § 1, ал. 1^о
от Регламент (ЕС) 2017/725

Assoc. Prof. Virsaviya Vaseva, MD, PhD

01.04.2026, Sofia