STATEMENT OF OPINION
by Prof. Vanya Gospodinova Hristova. PhD., VFU Chernorizets Hrabar
Member of the Scientific Jury pursuant to the Director of Institute for Population and Human Studies - Sofia
for on the procedure for awarding the degree of PhD of Psychology
by Vanya Stanislavova Slavova,
professional field 3.2. Psychology

In recent decades, attention has focused on two significant and interrelated social and psychological constructs that affect not only the functioning of the individual within society but also have a direct impact on the functioning of society as a whole.

First, there is the alarming trend of increasingly early onset of mental health issues among adolescents and young adults, characterized by anxiety, depressive states, emotional instability, and difficulties in adaptation. On the other hand, young people are reaching the stage of readiness for independent living later and later, a phenomenon associated with "extended adolescence," indicating that the process of personal maturation, social independence, and assuming responsibilities is being delayed over time.

Examining the social-emotional health of high school students in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as their school engagement, level of mental health and well-being, and their future expectations, is a question whose answer defines the relevance of this dissertation. Thus, based on the dissertation research conducted in private and public schools in Sofia, it would be possible to examine the level of positive development among young people, their functioning in the academic sphere, and their subjective mental functioning.

The significance of such a task is determined not only by the scarcity of research on this issue in Bulgaria, but also by the immediate practical benefit that its results would provide to those working in the educational environment.

1. **EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PHD CANDIDATE**

1.1. The most significant contributions of Vanya Stanislavova Slavova from the dissertation work are the following:

- ✓ New knowledge related to the positive development of young people in the Republic of Bulgaria has been conceptualized, based on leading theoretical and practical educational models.
- ✓ The study has expanded existing knowledge on an issue that has been little researched in Europe and in Bulgaria: the educational characteristics of the high school environment in both public and private schools.
- ✓ The author's methods for assessing social-emotional health (Social-Emotional Health Survey-Secondary – SEHS) and adolescents' expectations for the future (Future Expectations Scale for Adolescents – FESA) have been adapted and validated for use in Bulgaria.

2. **CRITICAL NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DISSERTATION**

I have no critical remarks on the substantive aspects of the main theses and their proof in this dissertation.

3. CONCLUSION OF THE DISSERTATION

In conclusion, on the basis of the above, I propose the distinguished members of the Scientific Jury to award the PhD. of Educational and Developmental Psychology to Vanya Stanislavova Slavova in the professional field 3.2. "Psychology".

May 19, 2026 Prepared the opinion:

(Prof. Vanya Hristova, PhD.)