*COMMENTS*

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# ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES IN BULGARIA

The main objective of the current study is to identify the key economic problems that are the subject of discussions among the academic community during the economic conferences carried out in Bulgaria, as well as their solutions and the quality of their argumentation. For the purposes of the research, 300 articles of habilited participants, presented in 8 scientific conferences, held in Bulgaria in 2016, are examined. An analytical toolkit for systematized assessment, based on the good practices of reputed national and international journals, has been proposed and applied. Based on the achieved results, conclusions and measures are formulated for the improvement of the paper reviewing process. It is concluded admission for publishing of predominantly those papers which contribute to definition and solving the general economic problem of the national economy taking into account its historic, geographic specifics, legal framework and level of technology development and usage.

*Keywords:* economic problems; economic solutions; assessment; economic science

JEL: A11; Y3

The idea for this publication came about during a discussion, organized by the Economics Section of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria about the contribution of economic science to solving the important problems, facing the development of the national economy.[1] First, a theoretical understanding of what are the major contemporary economic problems is achieved. Then, the methodology of collecting and interpreting data, presenting the obtained results, commenting on them and drawing conclusions and recommendations is established.

## Which are the current economic problems of the development of the national economy? What are the economic solutions?

The first question, before characterizing problems discussed during conferences, is to identify key current economic problems which are important for national economy development. The initial theoretical statement of the study is that determining the economic problems facing the modern development of the national economy is related to determining the contemporary content of the fundamental economic

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[1] The discussion was held on the 12th of March, 2018 at a joint meeting of the representatives of the Economics Section at the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria and the Economic Research Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Science.

problem. It is general knowledge that the economic sciences emerge and develop in order to resolve the problem concerning the scarcity of resources for the satisfaction of people's needs and desires. This fundamental problem is related to the choice of mechanism of every society for determining how to use the limited resources which can be substituted by alternative resources in the production process in order for various goods to be produced. It is necessary to define among which consumers these resources have to be allocated. Many fundamental questions arise from this problem, such as what, how and for who should be produced; market regulation and deregulation; production capacity and the alternative price principle (Samuelson and Nordhaus 2010, p. 33).

Depending on what has to be produced for the needs of the society, the fundamental economic problem has various aspects from a historical and geographical point of view. The consumers' needs in the Cold North are completely different from the consumers' needs in the Hot South. Human needs in the 21$^{st}$ century differ from those in the 18$^{th}$ century, as today they are heavily influenced by the rampant creation and dissemination of new knowledge, which in turn determines the technology that will be used in the production process. Depending on this fact, the optimal solutions to the fundamental economic problem are different.

In the economic theory, these solutions are related to:

• maximum economic efficiency, following Pareto's principle. In this way, the production process is efficient only when the production resources are allocated in such a way that their reallocation does not result in a production process where the production of more of one good does not lead to the production of less of another good;

• optimal usage of the available resources – extensive and intensive;

• economic growth and a better living standard. The solution to the fundamental economic problem is related to the economic growth which requires the production of more goods. It is a result of the impact of many factors and for this reason various models for their assessment are created, such as the model of Harrod-Domar, the neoclassical models of Solow and Swan, and the Cambridge models for economic development of Kaldor and Joan Robinson.

The question of the allocation of the limited resources and the resulting goods can be solved in different ways depending on the legislation and functioning of the economy. This regulation is outside of the economic system, but it defines the content of the fundamental economic problem.

The various mechanisms for resource allocation in every society can be defined as planned, totalitarian, market and combined. When the regulation norms are not met, this mechanism can be defined as "anarchy" with prerequisites for self-organization. In every one of these mechanisms (the reallocation of resources and goods, determined by non-economic factors) there is a corresponding optimal solution to the fundamental economic problem. The problem of resource allocation is reflected in the correlation between consumer and capital goods, which should be produced by the relevant society.

In other words – the dilemma in the solution of the fundamental economic problem is that it has time changing content, depends not only on historic and geographic conditions but also on the legislation and the development of science and technology. Therefore, this problem must be continuously analyzed and proper solutions must be identified.

In the recent Bulgarian economic literature, the formulation and search for solutions to the fundamental current economic problem takes very limited place, which could be defined as neglected. Nevertheless, the acknowledged scientists and governing figures in the Bulgarian economic history define, discuss solutions of this problem, especially in the periods of transforming economic system according to the changes public choice for social development. The content of the proposed solutions of Acad. Ivan Evstratiev Geshov (1899) and Acad. Evgeni Mateev (1976) are identical regardless the different historical periods the both academicians use to work on. The both of them reach the same conclusions – that the solution of the fundamental economic problem means efficient resource usage, higher labor productivity, innovations and active participation of the country in the international division of labor.

The understanding of the opportunities and capacities for the solution of this problem is fundamental. Acad. Mateev argues that human intervention is possible due to the objectiveness of the economic lows and the establishment of public conditions for conscious impact over their manifestation. This intervention could be implemented through a specific policy (Mateev, 1953).[2] Moreover, the solution to the fundamental economic problem is put in a direct correlation with the speed-up of the development of the technique and technologies. As a matter of principle, the problems which determine the correlation between the management and planning of the national economy and the management and planning of the international economies are defined.

The growing complexity of definition and finding solution to the general economic problem is dynamic and exists creative specific solution for every national economy. This is the task of economists according to the conclusions of Acad. Mateev. This conclusion is relevant to the statement of the recently very popular book "Economics Rules: Why Economics Works, When It Fails, and How To Tell The Difference" (Rodrik, 2015). There it is stated that: "*The economy is not a type of science, in which there is an everlasting model, which works best in every context*". Consequently, "*the answer is not to reach a consensus on which is the right model, but to instead give proof about which model is the most workable in the relevant environment*".

In conclusion, the important problems and solutions of economic development in the frame of this article are connected with the fundamental economic problem,

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[2] Acad. Mateev defends the thesis on management (including planning as its sub-function) as an important activity for the development of the economy in the circumstances of rampant technological development. According to him the economy does not need to be examined as separate business strategies of the relevant companies, but as a system that operates on a macro level.

taking into account its solutions are historically, geographically and nationally specific and depend on the level of development and usage of new technologies, as well as of the public choice of the mechanism of the economic development.

The answer of the question of whether the Bulgarian scientists, who work in the field of economics, in their economic studies bind the results of their analysis to the fundamental economic problem and propose measures for its solution, as well as to what extent their studies are oriented towards the problems of the national economy, defines the *main goal of the current publication*: to characterize the economic problems and solutions, which are presented at scientific economic conferences in Bulgaria. The main focus of the study is placed over the problems and solutions for the development of the national economy in modern times.

*The object* of the present research are 300 papers of habilited participants, presented and published at 8 national scientific economic conferences in the country, and its *subject* are the problems and quality of their solutions. *The restrictive conditions of the study* are related to the time period of the research (2016) and its focus – only scientific papers publicly available on the internet are examined. In accordance with the main goal of the study, the following tasks are performed. First of all, a database of specific criteria is established; secondly, an analytical tool for systematized assessment, based on the various qualitative indicators which characterized the quality content of the papers, presented at university scientific conferences, is implemented, and lastly, conclusions about the assessment of the economic policy in the field of the development in the economic sciences in Bulgaria are summarized.

## State-of-the-art of the research on the problem

The identification of the economic problems and their solutions at the economic conferences in Bulgaria is an important issue that has not been studied so far. Similar in subject is the article by Prof. V. Todorov, published in the Economic Thought Journal (Todorov, 2017), which is devoted to the analysis of papers from economic conferences in political economy and has a different object of research, related to the identification of the political economy. The current study analyzes the conference proceedings of all the scientific economic conferences held in Bulgaria in order to identify in depth the state-of-the-art of the economic studies in the country.

In order to define the quality of the economic studies, the main task is related to establishing the evaluating methodology. The methodology of the Ministry of Education and Science for the quality assessment of the economic education in Bulgaria (in order for a ranking system of the higher schools in Bulgaria to be implemented) is of great interest for the purposes of the study. Ministry of Education and Science published the results in 2017. The methodology, implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science consists of six indicators, one of which is "scientific research". The other five indicators are: educational process, educational environment, social and administrative services, image, employment of graduates and regional significance. The indicator "scientific research" is calculated as a result group index, based on seventeen individual indicators, such as the citation of articles and "documents" in

*SCOPUS* and *Web of Science*, articles which are indexed and refereed in international databases, PhD programs in the relevant professional field and correlation between PhD students and students.

As far as the term "documents" in the group indicator for the quality assessment of the economic education in Bulgaria of the Ministry of Education and Science is concerned, it also includes the conference papers of scientific economic conferences. The quality of these papers is assessed solely based on whether they are cited or published in publications indexed in *SCOPUS* and *Web of Science.* The applied evaluating methodologies do not respect topics discussed from the point of view of national challenges solution. Such approach is partly applied here.

## Collecting and interpreting data

The data used in the study is based on 300 publicly available conference papers from 8 scientific conferences, which are known to have been held in 2016. The scientific conferences are organized by 12 universities and scientific institutions which have received economic sciences accreditation by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) in the Republic of Bulgaria. The analyzed conference proceedings are listed in the references of the study.

The restriction of the time period of the research (2016) is related to the fact that at the time of its composition (the beginning of 2018) not all of the conference proceedings from the scientific economic conferences held in 2017 were published. Only the conference proceedings which are publicly available on the official websites of the relevant universities are analyzed. Scientific economic conferences, organized for students and PhD students are not studied. Papers by students, PhD students and lecturers, who do not possess a scientific degree (Doctor of Science or PhD), in the conference proceedings are excluded from the current research. This is done in order to assess the quality of the papers, presented by scientists who have an academic rank and professionals with a scientific degree.

12 scientific institutions in Bulgaria in the field of the economic sciences are included in the sample:

- Economic Research Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Science (BAS);
- University of National and World Economy (all faculties);
- Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"- Faculty of Economics;
- University of Economics – Varna (all faculties);
- "Dimitar A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics – Svishtov (all faculties);
- Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" – Faculty of Economy and Social Sciences;
- New Bulgarian University – Department of Economics;
- University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Kiril i Metodii" – Faculty of Economics;
- South-West University "Neofit Rilski" – Faculty of Economics;
- Trakia University – Stara Zagora, Faculty of Economics;
- University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev" – Faculty of Business and Management;
- Technical University – Sofia, Faculty of Economics.

The scientific institutions in the sample are chosen in accordance with the ranking system of the scientific institutions in the professional field of Economics of the Ministry of Education and Science (2017). The ranking system includes 26 scientific institutions in the professional field of Economics and the 12 chosen institutions represent nearly half of them. The selection is among top institutions in ranking system which has published proceedings at the end of 2017.

The analytical toolkit applied for the purposes of the research allows for papers in the conference proceedings to be grouped in various fields. The grouping is based on the meanings of the relevant groups of the analytical indicators:

*The first group of indicators characterizes the universities which have held scientific conferences as a unit of observation.*

Indicator 1.1: number of universities, accredited in the professional field of Economics compared to the total number of universities in Bulgaria;

Indicator 1.2: number of universities in the sample, which have not organized scientific conferences in 2016;

*The second group of indicators characterizes the observed universities in accordance with their potential for technology transfer, determined by the participation of foreign scientists in Bulgarian scientific conferences.*

Indicator 2.1: participation of foreign scientists;

Indicator 2.2: distribution of the participating foreign scientist depending on their country of origin;

*The third group of indicators characterizes the conference proceedings depending on the ratio between theoretical and applied studies.*

Indicator 3.1: share of the theoretical studies in the total number of published papers;

Indicator 3.2: share of the applied studies in the total number of published papers;

Indicator 3.3: distribution of the theoretical studies according to the discussed topics.

*The fourth group of indictors is dedicated to the quality of the studies.*

Indicator 4.1: relevance of the economic theory, used in the studies (papers published before and after 1995);

Indicator 4.2: possibility for the results of the study to be directly implemented into the practice (specific recommendations and conclusions);

Indicator 4.3: relation of the content of the applied studies to the fundamental economic problem (according to Samuelson, Geshov and Mateev);

Indicator 4.4: papers which have no relationship with the development of the Bulgarian economy (related to other economies or papers that are predominantly theoretical);

*The fifth group of indicators characterizes studies which deviate from the standard scientific style rules.*

Indicator 5.1: papers with exotic titles (from an economic theory viewpoint);

Indicator 5.2: papers with exotic and unclear economic statements in their content;

Indicator 5.3: papers, which prove well-known theses or theses, which require no proof in 2016.

*The sixth group of indicators is dedicated to the quality of the statistical data used in the papers.*

Indicator 6.1: papers that have used figures and tables with no contribution from the author to the presentation of the statistical data (data is directly copied from the National Statistical Institute (NSI) database, EUROSTAT, etc. and pasted in the paper);

Indicator 6.2: papers with no figures and tables;

Indicator 6.3: papers with figures and tables with contribution from the author to the presentation of statistical data;

*The seventh group of indicators evaluates the correctness of the citation.*

Indicator 7.1: papers with no references;

Indicator 7.2: papers with 1-3 references;

Indicator 7.3: papers with references which are not cited in accordance with the Bulgarian or international styles of referencing;

Indicator 7.4: papers with predominantly outdated references (published before 1995);

*The eighth group of indicators characterizes papers which reproduce legal acts, national policies and strategies, action plans, etc.*

Indicator 8.1: papers whose content closely resembles the content of national policies and strategies, public reports of international institutions and organizations such as the EU, the UN, etc.;

Indicator 8.2: distribution of topics of the papers, reproducing public documents.

New indicators could be added, but only if the increase in the number of indicators does not lead to a de-focusing of the main purpose of the study.

## Results of the study and discussion

The empirical approbation of the analytical model is done for each of the group of indicators. The quantitative results for each of the groups are analyzed individually and a summary for all groups of indicators is presented and discussed.

*Table 1*

First group of indicators: How active the universities are in organizing scientific conferences

| № | Name | % of the total number |
|---|---|---|
| Indicator 1.1 | Number of universities, accredited in the professional field of Economics compared to the total number of universities in Bulgaria | 51 |
| Indicator 1.2 | Number of universities in the sample, which have not held scientific conferences in 2016 | 25 |

The data in Table 1 shows that half of the universities in Bulgaria (26) are accredited in the professional field of Economics (Ministry of Education and Science, 2017). This means that the number of academic staff, who is engaged not

only with the education of students but also with the writing of articles, papers and books, is high in these higher schools. If we add the Economic Research Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Science and the Institute of Agricultural Economy, the number of scientific institutions in the field of Economics will become 28.

The data (indicator 1.2) also shows that one fourth of the scientific institutions have not held conferences in the analyzed period. Even if we assume that some of the universities organize conferences every other year, the number of scientists from these universities who participate in conferences, organized by other economic institutions and higher schools is worryingly low. If we exclude scientists, who have their main labor agreement at other institutions, the number is approximately 20% of their staff. This means that a large number of scientists in one fourth of the analyzed universities have at least one year of stay of academic activity. In order for the aforementioned conclusion to be confirmed, the number of articles and books by these people that are published in refereed and indexed journals must be taken into account.

In conclusion, the data in Table 1 indicate that a considerable number of academic staff have not carried out research activity. The lack of research activity is one of the reasons why Bulgarian universities are not ranked in the international academic rankings. Table 1 shows that one fourth of the analyzed scientific institutions did not organize scientific conferences in 2016. In the following seven tables, the quality of the carried out scientific conferences by Bulgarian universities in the field of Economics is examined.

*Table 2*

Second group of indicators: Participation of foreign scientists in
Bulgarian scientific conferences

| № | Name | % of the total number |
|---|------|----------------------|
| Indicator 2.1 | Participation of foreign scientists; | 10 |
| Indicator 2.2 | Distribution of the participating foreign scientists, depending on their country of origin: | |
| | Russia, CIS, Ukraine | 40 |
| | Germany | 30 |
| | Lithia, Latvia, Estonia | 10 |
| | Others | 20 |

The data in Table 2 (indicator 2.1) shows that the participation of foreign scientists in Bulgarian economic conferences is too low – 10%. In comparison, the number of the foreign participants is much over 30% at economic conferences held by economic universities in other EU Member States (e.g. the School of Economics and Management of Public Administration in Bratislava, 2017). The number of foreign scientists, who participate in conferences, organized by the more elite universities is over 50%.According to the data of indicator 2.2, mainly scientists from Russia, the CIS and Ukraine are interested in participating in Bulgarian economic conferences. This is mainly due to the fact that most of the panel sessions in these conferences are held in Bulgarian, not in English or another EU language.

*Table 3*

Third group of indicators: Ratio between theoretical and applied studies

| № | Name | % of the total number |
|---|------|----------------------|
| Indicator 3.1 | Share of the theoretical studies in the total number of published papers | 15 |
| Indicator 3.2 | Share of the applied studies in the total number of published papers | 85 |
| Indicator 3.3 | Distribution of the theoretical studies according to the discussed topics | |
| | Employment and unemployment | 7 |
| | Welfare, poverty and income inequality | 7 |
| | Economic policy | 5 |
| | Foreign direct investments | 4 |
| | Macroeconomic imbalance | 4 |
| | Innovations and competitiveness, Knowledge-based economy | 30 |
| | International economic relations | 5 |
| | Fiscal policy | 2 |
| | Monetary policy | 4 |
| | Economic growth | 15 |
| | Cobb-Douglas production function | 7 |
| | Political economy | 10 |

According to the data in Table 3, only 15% of the papers in conference proceedings are theoretical. Most of the theoretical papers deal with research in the field of innovations, competitiveness and economic growth. Some of the papers are written in the field of political economy. More information about them could be found in the study of Todorov (2017). There are no research papers in the field of popular theoretical fields such as Neuroeconomics and Public Choice Theory. It can be assumed that the theoretical studies, presented at Bulgarian scientific conferences are related to the economic theory mainstreams. One of the goals of the scientific conferences is for the new ideas in the written papers to be approbated in front of an audience of professionals, so that they can be further developed in monographs at a later point in time.

*Table 4*

Fourth group of indicators: Quality of the studies

| № | Name | % of the total number |
|---|------|----------------------|
| Indicator 4.1 | Relevance of the economic theory, used in the studies (papers published before and after 1995) | 35 |
| Indicator 4.2 | Possibility for the results of the study to be directly implemented into the practice (specific recommendations and conclusions) | 28 |
| Indicator 4.3 | Relation of the content of the applied studies to the fundamental economic problem (according to Samuelson, Geshov and Mateev) | 37 |
| Indicator 4.4 | Papers which have no relationship with the development of the Bulgarian economy (related to other economies or papers that are predominantly theoretical) | 26 |

The examined indicators in Table 4 are related to the quality of papers from conference proceedings. According to indicator 4.1, one third of the papers do not take in account the research carried out in the last fifteen years.

The data in indicator 4.2 show that in one third of the papers there are no clear conclusions and recommendations, which means that they have no contribution to the practice and to the solution of the fundamental economic problem. Indicator 4.3 gives information about the scientific value of the papers. Most of the papers have no relation to the fundamental economic problem, examined in the introduction of the present study.

The number of papers which have no relation to the development of the Bulgarian economy is one fourth of the total number of papers.

As a conclusion, the number of papers (one third) which are based on outdated theoretical conclusions or in which there are no conclusions and recommendations and do not examine problems of the national economy, is too large and this results in the lower implementation of the papers into the practice.

*Table 5*

Fifth group of indicators: Studies which deviate from the
standard scientific style rules

| № | Name | % of the total number |
|---|------|----------------------|
| Indicator 5.1 | Papers with exotic titles (from an economic theory viewpoint) | 2 |
| Indicator 5.2 | Papers with exotic and unclear economic statements in their content | 8 |
| Indicator 5.3 | Papers, which prove well-known theses or theses, which require no proof in 2016 | 9 |

In Table 5 are presented the papers which deviate from the standard scientific style rules. On the one hand, the percentage of papers with exotic titles in indicator 5.1 is not too high – 2%. On the other hand, even such a low percentage is inadmissible for scientists with an academic rank or a scientific degree. Some examples with short comments will be given in the following paragraphs:

Title of the paper: "*Analysis of the foreign tourism growth in Bulgaria for the period January – July 2016".*

Comment: It must be taken into account that the summer tourist season in Bulgaria starts in May and ends in the end of September. The winter tourist season starts in mid-October and ends in March. It is not clear what the conclusions of the author and his recommendations concerning the growth of foreign tourism are, considering the fact that he examines a time period which covers neither the summer, nor the winter tourist season. What is the significance of the presented paper and how will the author's conclusions be implemented into the practice?

Title of the paper: "*Impact of the aggregated costs over the economic growth in Bulgaria over the last years".*

Comment: what does the period of analysis "*over the last years*", as it is defined in the title of the paper, which examines issues, related to the economic

growth, mean? In what manner can the conclusions of this paper be compared to the conclusions of other papers, related to the same topic, when it is not clear what the period of analysis is?

Many other titles of papers that require no comment could be mentioned: "*The advertising in the bosom of the epistemological occupation"*, "*Beekeeping – a livelihood of the past and a guarantee for the future"*.

In indicator 5.2 are identified the papers with exotic and unclear economic statements in their content. Their percentage in the total number of papers is 8%.

The following statement is written at the beginning of an economic study:

*"In the mid-sixties, one of the most successful spaghetti western films "The Good, the Bad, the Ugly" appeared on the big screen".*

Examples of unclear statements:

*"*According to the size of the company, we can conclude that the big *companies to the least degree* do *not* make investments in innovations".

Comment: it is not clear if big companies consider investments as a positive phenomenon, as they do not make investments to a considerable degree or vice versa.

Indicator 5.3 covers papers which prove well-known theses or theses, which do not require proof in 2016. In this regard the following example could be given:

Title of the paper: *"Higher education as a factor for the prosperity of the national economy".*

Comment: There is no doubt that higher education is a key factor for the prosperity of the national economy in 2016. The EU Strategy 2020 for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth, which was adopted back in 2010, highlighted the requirements for the EU Member States for an improved quality of education, as well as research activities whose results can be easily implemented into the practice, thus encouraging innovations as a result of the interaction between the economy and the research institutions (COM/2010/2020, p.14, 15). That is to say, in 2010 the EU adopted a policy for the implementation of a knowledge-based economy, but in Bulgaria an economic paper in 2016 proves how important higher education is for the economic prosperity of the country.

Title of the paper: *"Knowledge as an alternative indicator for economic growth"*

Comment: According to the global competitiveness index, knowledge is accepted as an indicator for economic growth (Schwab2010). However, in Bulgaria, in 2016, the author of the aforementioned paper wants to prove that this fact is true.

Title of the paper: *"The innovation concept as a factor for reaching a competitive advantage"*

Comment: the innovation concept as a factor for competitive advantage was adopted a long time ago (Porter and Stern, 2001).

In conclusion, the data in table 5 show that 10% of the papers proved exotic or well-known theses, which is a significantly high figure, as most of these authors have an academic rank or possess a scientific degree.

*Table 6*

Sixth group of indicators: Quality of the statistical data
used in the papers

| № | Name | % of the total number |
|---|------|------|
| Indicator 6.1 | Papers that include figures and tables with no contribution from the author to the presentation of the statistical data (data is directly copied from the National Statistical Institute database, EUROSTAT, etc. and pasted in the paper) | 51 |
| Indicator 6.2 | Papers with no figures and tables | 28 |
| Indicator 6.3 | Papers with figures and tables with contribution from the author to the presentation of statistical data | 21 |

The quality of the statistical data used in the papers is examined in Table 6. According to the data, one fifth of the papers include tables and figures, which are created as a result of the author's calculations. In most of the papers, the statistical data is directly copied from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria or from EUROSTAT and pasted in the papers. At the same time, with the development of modern communication devices, every person has access to the Internet and has the opportunity to take the information which is officially published on the web-sites of the NSI or EUROSTAT and to generate tables and figures.

*Table 7*

Seventh group of indicators: Correctness of the citation

| № | Name | % of the total number |
|---|------|------|
| Indicator 7.1 | Papers with no references | 17 |
| Indicator 7.2 | Papers with 1-3 references | 8 |
| Indicator 7.3 | Papers in which the references are not cited in accordance with the Bulgarian or international styles of referencing | 24 |
| Indicator 7.4 | Papers with predominantly outdated references (published before 1995) | 15 |

The correctness of citation is examined in Table 7. It is identified that one fifth of the papers have no references – indicator 7.1. In the international scientific practice, this means that the author of the paper has formulated a new economic theory. Most of the papers which are published in indexed and refereed journals have over 10 references. (e.g. Guriev and Melnikov, 2016).

In addition, 8% of the papers have 1 to 3 references (indicator 7.2), and 24% of the papers have references which are not cited in accordance with the Bulgarian or international styles of referencing (indicator 7.3). According to the data in indicator 7.4, another 15% of the papers have predominantly outdated references (published before 1995).

Consequently, it can be assumed that more than one fourth of the papers do not meet the citation criteria and this fact brings the quality of these papers into question.

*Table 8*

Eighth group of indicators: Papers which reproduce legal acts, national
policies and strategies, action plans, etc.

| № | Name | % of the total number |
|---|---|---|
| Indicator 8.1 | Papers whose content closely resembles the content of national policies and strategies, public reports of international institutions and organizations such as the EU, the UN, etc. | 26 |
| Indicator 8.2 | Distribution of the titles of the papers, reproducing public documents | |
| | Documents, concerning employment and unemployment | 9 |
| | Documents, concerning welfare, poverty and income inequality | 5 |
| | Documents, concerning migration | 16 |
| | Documents, concerning environmental management | 12 |
| | Documents, concerning European economic integration | 51 |
| | Documents, concerning education | 7 |

According to Table 8, one fourth of the papers reproduce national policies, strategies and documents of the EU and the UN institutions or other international organizations. There are neither critical analyses nor specific recommendations and conclusions in these studies. The reproduction of the content of public documents in scientific papers is not a research article but a newspaper one.

According to indicator 8.2, most of the papers, reproducing public documents, are in the field of European economic integration, environmental management and migration. Most of the public documents of European and international institutions are also in the aforementioned fields and these documents have been published in Bulgarian since 2007.

Consequently, the data in Table 8 show that one fourth of the papers, reproducing public documents are mass media articles but not research papers, as they do not represent a critical analysis or propose measures, recommendations and conclusions.

At the end it could be summarized the applied approach and data produced provides opportunities to identify many problems before organizing research conferences, publishing proceedings and planning the topics for such events.

## Conclusions

The main objective of the current study was to identify the key economic problems that are the subject of discussions among the academic community during the economic conferences carried out in Bulgaria, as well as their solutions and the quality of their argumentation. In this respect the methodology applied consider not only quantitative indicators of the Ministry of education and science, but own approach and indicators allowing to make conclusion how the conferences contribute to national economy development.

The presented results of the survey show a wide range of papers at scientific conferences, and a significant number of authors discussing economic topics. The

summary of the discussed issues imposes the conclusion that these papers are devoted to a vast variety of research questions, when they are defined in the articles. On the other hand, the most important for national economic development problems (defined as in the Bulgarian scientific tradition of Acad. Ivan Geshov and Acad. Evgeni Mateev – productivity, effectiveness of use of the national resources, innovations and transfer of knowledge, productivity, effectiveness of use of the national resources, productivity, innovations and transfer of knowledge) practically in many cases are neglected. In this regard, not many papers contribute to the development of the economic theory or give recommendations that could be directly implemented into the practice.

This state of the art is a result mainly of insufficient efforts of the organizing and program committees of these scientific conferences who admit papers without a main thesis or objective of research for publication. Practically they neglect one of the main requirements of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency for the accreditation of the universities in the relevant professional field - the main thesis and objective of research to be available in the papers of conference proceedings. In addition, the prevailing is number of papers with no clear conclusions, recommendations and measures for the development of the national economy, and their results cannot be implemented into the practice.

Along with the aforementioned problems, it is necessary to pay more attention to papers with exotic titles, unclear statements and proving well-known theses. The existence of papers, reproducing publicly available statistical data without any specific analysis and recommendations raise the question what is the author's contribution to the research.

The next problem organizing and program committees have to solve concerns citations and bibliography. Significant number of papers with no or up to 3 references is a disturbing fact. It could be interesting to examine what number of these papers, have been published in indexed or refereed international journals.

The next problem defined on the base of analyzing the survey results is lack of research question defined. The number of papers, presenting national policies and strategies or the public documents of international organizations without any critical analysis, specific comments and recommendations is too large. Such papers should not be accepted as research papers.

The overall conclusion of the current study is that the organizing and program committees of scientific conferences have to improve and coordinate their work. *First of all*, they need to put more efforts to better define the main goal of the national or international economic conferences. The papers, presented at the scientific conferences in the country should contribute to the solution of main problems related to the development of the national economy.

A better use of the national potential for economic research requires better long and short term planning and coordination of the conference topics to be defined among institutions. This role could be taken by the Bulgarian Academy of Science, and in particular its Coordination Council "Man and Society", by restoring

the Coordination Council in Economics at the BAS or the Economics Section at the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria.

*Secondly*, the organizing and program committees of scientific conferences have to increase their responsibility in the process of selection of papers presented and published.

*Thirdly*, it could be recommended they have to be responsible for preparation and publication of a summary of research questions discussed and solutions suggested during scientific conferences, providing short argumentation. They need to make policy-makers known with the main results and ideas for their implementation in the economic policy and strategies of the country.

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