

Annex 1 – Template Dissertation Report EPS



Joint Dissertation Review

Name of the student:	Ruben Sansom
Title of the thesis:	Balancing the good and the bad of the EU-led liberalization of the public sector: the case of cross-border passenger railway services in the European Union
Reviewer:	Visnja Vukov

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

The research addresses an important question of the effects of liberalization on cross-border railway services in the EU. The student does a very good job in presenting his research question and its theoretical and policy relevance. He is also very thorough in his literature review, engaging with scholarship on liberalization and clearly showing the contribution to the state of the art.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The research design is well thought through and the methodology is highly appropriate for the research question. The thesis uses quantitative analysis and the student has produced a novel dataset as a part of this research. The hypotheses are clear and theoretically well justified. The operationalization of the main independent variable could at times be more clearly explained, but it is overall well executed. The analysis of the panel data is well done and the results of the analysis are convincing.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

Research objectives have been attained and the student has made a very good link between the data and the conclusions. The broader theoretical implications could still be somewhat better specified. For instance, the student concludes that it is difficult to generalize from his analysis to other sectors, while actually there is no reason why some of these findings – especially the positive effects of liberalization on cross-border provision of services - could not be relevant for other service sectors as well. With regards to the broader debates on good and bad sides of liberalization, the conclusion could also more explicitly address the fact that understanding good and bad in relation to cross-border provision of services is only one possible way of tackling this issue and it could mention other possible perspectives on positive or negative effects of liberalization. Furthermore, one of the interesting findings is that while liberalization does NOT lead to declining quality of service as might be expected, its positive effects are only present if a sufficient prior level of development and investment in the sector has already been achieved. The policy implications of this finding could also be further elaborated. Nevertheless, the conclusion is overall very well written and the arguments and contributions of the research are clear.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

All the formal academic standards have been met by the student.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The student has produced an excellent thesis, with very relevant and interesting findings. The thesis is overall very well written, with strong theoretical background, adequate research design and important and novel results. While there is space for further improvements, in particular in the clarity of the operationalization of the main variables and in the elaboration of theoretical and policy implications, it is nevertheless a very strong piece of research.

Grade (A-F)	9.5 A
Date	Signature
25/06/2022	