

REVIEW

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Iskra Marinova Panteleeva, PhD,
D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov
Field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences
Professional field 3.8. Economics,
Scientific specialty: Economics and Management (Industry)

About: Dissertation for acquisition of Doctor's Educational and Scientific Degree (Doctor of Philosophy) in the professional field 3.8. Economics, Doctoral Program in Economics and Management (Industry), at the Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov

Author of the dissertation: Alexandar Tihomirov Lichev

Scientific Leader: Prof. Dr. Aneta Deneva

Topic of the dissertation: „Entrepreneurship in the context of the concept of sustainable development”

Grounds for submitting the review: Order No. 1058 of 26.10.2023 of the Rector of the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics for opening a procedure and determining the composition of the scientific jury for the defense of a dissertation, Decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Industry and Commerce (Protocol No. 13/24.10.2023) and Decision of the Scientific Jury, taken at the First Meeting, held on 02.11.2023 (Protocol No. 1).

I. Information about the PhD student

Doctoral student Alexander Tikhomirov Lichev was born on June 2, 1987 in Svishtov. In 2019, he acquired a bachelor's degree in Industrial Economics at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (Svishtov), and in 2011 he graduated from the Master's Degree programme in Industrial Management (D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov). He holds a certificate of professional qualification “Teacher” in

Economic pedagogy, as well as “Organizer and controller in the specialty “Organization and management of tourism”. His professional path began in 2011 as a programmer – web sites in D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, and since 2014 he holds the position of expert “Technological maintenance” in the Academic Computer Centre, at the same Academy.

Alexander Lichev is fluent in English and has very good computer skills. He is active and has participated in a number of conferences and trainings, including the Central European Exchange Program in University Education (CEEPUS).

According to the Order No. 156/23.03.2021 of the Rector of the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics from 01.04.2021 Alexander Lichev was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in a doctoral programme Economics and Management (Industry) at the Department of Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship of the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (Svishtov). He was charged with the right of defense, according to Protocol No. 3/05.10.2023 of the Department council of the Department of Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship and Protocol No. 2/24.10.2023 of the Faculty council of the Faculty of Industry and Commerce.

II. General presentation of the dissertation work

The dissertation has a total volume of 255 pages. In terms of type, volume and structure, the dissertation is in accordance with the requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. It consists of: title page (1 page), table of contents (3 pages), introduction (5 pages), main text in three chapters (212 pages), conclusion (4 pages) and references (8 pages). A list of tables (1 page) and a list of figures (3 pages) are presented, as well as a systematization of the introduced abbreviations. The main text of the dissertation includes 7 tables and 66 figures. The bibliography consists 151 literary sources, of which 125 – in Cyrillic, and 26 – in Latin, as well as 74 Internet sources.

III. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation

The main methodological aspects of the dissertation are presented in the **introduction** – the topicality of the topic is substantiated, a brief overview of the authors working on the topic of the dissertation is given, the subject, object, purpose, thesis and hypotheses are formulated, the framework and sources are outlined of information provision of the dissertation, the used research methods are presented, as

well as the limitations regarding the theoretical scope, the subject and the object of research.

The **topic** of the development is current, well-founded on the basis of arguments related to the significance, the directions of impact and the directions for achieving positives from entrepreneurship from the standpoint of the concept of sustainable development. The **object of research** are the modern Bulgarian entrepreneurs, carrying out activity in sector “C” – processing industry, and the **subject of research** – the attitudes and behaviour of the Bulgarian industrial entrepreneurs in the context of the understanding of sustainable development. The wording of the topic, subject and object of research are precise and clear.

The **aim of the dissertation** is based on an in-depth study and interpretation of the existing scientific-theoretical statements and the data from the empirical study to examine the current state and prospects for the development of entrepreneurship in Bulgaria through the prism of the concept of sustainable development. The aspiration is to derive and approve a modern model for the deployment of entrepreneurial activity, based on the motivation to achieve stability and economic prosperity. The **goal** is relatively well defined, pointing to the essence of the development, the expected results and contribution moments. 6 **tasks** have been identified in connection with the achievement of the goal, which follow the logic from theory to practice, all of them have been fulfilled.

The **thesis** that the PhD student defends is that, at the modern stage, reasonably implemented transformations with the assumption of responsibilities in the spirit of the understanding of sustainable development, is a decisive condition for the long-term success of one's own business and for achieving competitive advantages for the Bulgarian economy. The formulation of the thesis provides an opportunity to outline the theoretical basics; conducting research, collecting, evaluating and analysing the necessary empirical information; achieving measurable results and enriching scientific knowledge. There is a direct connection with the three **hypotheses** identified. Pre-defined limitations in terms of thematic and temporal scope bring additional clarity and strengthen the focus on the specific object and subject of research.

The **structure of main text** is logically supported, allowing for the consistent development of research ideas and the achievement of contribution moments.

The **first chapter** is *theoretical*. It is dedicated to the relationship between entrepreneurship and sustainable development. The main scientific and theoretical positions are presented. A systematisation of the factors that have an impact on the development of entrepreneurship has been made. The concept of sustainable development and its relationship with entrepreneurship is clarified. There is

definitional clarity in the conceptual apparatus used. The content of the first part of the presentation allows a smooth transition to the empirical study of the topic in Bulgaria.

The **second chapter** has a *practical focus*. In it, the PhD student examines the practical projections of entrepreneurship in Bulgaria through the prism of its evolutionary development and impact on entrepreneurial culture, as well as in the context of the relationship “national specificity – global trends for sustainable development”. Based on the defined conceptual framework and methodology for conducting the empirical study, a system of empirical indicators was constructed to provide the information base of the research toolkit, and the results of the conducted practical study of the attitudes and behaviour of modern Bulgarian entrepreneurs are presented.

The **third chapter** has an *empirical-creative character*. Its purpose is to establish the applied aspects in the study of entrepreneurship in Bulgaria. The results of the empirical research related to the attitudes and behaviour of Bulgarian entrepreneurs are presented, as well as their interpretation. The main problems have been identified, the key priorities have been outlined and important guidelines for the sustainable development of entrepreneurship in Bulgarian conditions have been defined. An author's model of sustainable development of entrepreneurship has been developed and tested.

After each chapter, the main summaries and conclusions are made.

In the **conclusion**, relevant summaries are formulated regarding the content of the individual chapters and the results achieved, specific conclusions are drawn and the directions for further development and challenges are outlined in the context of the dynamic development of the world, economies and the sector.

The **total volume** of the dissertation corresponds to the requirements for a scientific work of this type. Structurally, the parts of the exposition are balanced (62 p. – 69 p. – 80 p.). **Figures and tables** help to illustrate the content well. A variety of **scholarly methods** were used, suitable for the theoretical and empirical development of the dissertation's research views. The issue of dissertation work has been widely studied. The dissertation has referred to a large number of **studies**.

The **style** of the dissertation is scholarly. The **terminological apparatus** is appropriately used and presupposes the achievement of a wide-ranging and in-depth analysis of the problem in a theoretical and practical aspect. **Scientific ethics** have been observed. The **reference** to the literary sources is done correctly.

On the topic of the dissertation work, **4 independent scientific studies** were published in Bulgarian publishing houses: 2 articles and 2 reports. Parts of the dissertation have been presented at 3 scientific forums – 1 doctoral session and 2

conferences. The doctoral student also participated in one more doctoral session (with attendance). Scored **40 points** (minimum required 30.00 points). There is **fulfilment of the minimum national requirements** under the Regulations for the Application of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. In terms of quality and quantity, the publications meet the requirements for obtaining the PhD degree.

The **abstract** has a total volume of 49 pages. In terms of structure, content and style, it is well-formed and faithfully reflects in a synthesized form the main points of the dissertation work: object, subject, goal, tasks, thesis, hypotheses, methodological tools, theoretical and empirical research, achieved results, conclusions drawn and suggestions. The abstract includes a reference to the scientific and scientific-applied contributions; list of publications related to the dissertation; certificate of participation of the doctoral student in scientific forums with articles and reports, certificate of compliance with the national requirements under the Regulations for Application of the Low for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and a declaration of originality and credibility.

IV. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation work

The dissertation is an enriched scientific study. The author declares the achievement of the following scientific and scientific-applied contributions:

✓ As a result of an in-depth study of literary sources, the genesis of the entrepreneurial institution and its importance in the development of societies has been traced. The essence and scope of the basic concepts “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship” are defined from the standpoints of the evolution of the various economic and political processes in Bulgaria, and the manifestations of the historically conditioned features against the background of the unfolding modern global trends are outlined.

✓ The research views and statements regarding sustainable development and the new responsibilities that society and the economy impute to entrepreneurs have been studied, analysed and enriched, as well as the guidelines for a subsequent expanded scope of possible empirical interpretations.

✓ A methodological toolkit was developed and an empirical study of modern Bulgarian entrepreneurship was conducted with a focus on the possibilities for transition to sustainable development. Based on the analysis of the results of the practical study, important problems have been identified, essential priorities have been highlighted and possible directions for positive changes in entrepreneurial practice in Bulgaria have been outlined.

✓ From the standpoint of the concept of sustainable development and taking into account the complex and dynamically changing environment, an author's model for stimulating the development of responsible and sustainable entrepreneurship in Bulgaria has been developed and substantiated.

I believe that the formulated contributions reflect enriched and further developed moments on the subject of the dissertation work. I consider them to be the personal work of the author.

V. Critical notes, questions and recommendations on the dissertation work

Regarding the content and layout of the dissertation work, some notes and recommendations can be formulated, specifically:

- Recommended better presentation of the empirical research methodology.
- There is a different font when presenting part of the figures, as well as a need for a better technical layout of the text in the dissertation work and the visualization toolkit.

I would like to ask the following questions:

- Given the complex economic and geo-political situation, as well as the numerous problems of Bulgarian entrepreneurs, what can push the development of entrepreneurship in Bulgaria in a positive direction?
- What anchor points can entrepreneurs use to increase their positive/sustainable motivation to do business, expand the field of their entrepreneurial activity and take steps to achieve sustainability?
- Is there a connection between the stronger social commitment of the entrepreneur and his business, and the sustainability of his activity in an economic context?
- What accounts for the greater positivity in declaring an intention to start an entrepreneurial business, which generally has an abstract format, and the too reserved behaviour for taking real steps to start business initiatives?

The indicated notes and the questions asked are of a clarifying nature and relate to separate parts of the dissertation work. They do not detract from its merits and do not question my positive assessment.

VI. Summary conclusion and opinion

The dissertation on the topic “**Entrepreneurship in the context of the concept of sustainable development**” authored by doctoral student Alexandar Lichev has the necessary qualities for a scientific composition, represents a completed scientific study and shows that the candidate has mastered the basic theoretical knowledge and a

practical toolkit for conducting independent scientific studies. The dissertation meets the requirements under the Low for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (Article 6, Paragraph 3), the Regulations for Application of the Low for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (Article 27, Paragraphs 1 and 2), as well as the Regulations for Application of the Low for the Development of the Academic Staff in the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov.

I express my **positive assessment** of the submitted dissertation work and I **recommend** to the Scientific Jury, appointed by Order No. 1058 of 26.10.2023 of the Rector of the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov, to award **Alexandar Tihomirov Lichev PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty Economics and Management (Industry), doctoral program Economics and Management (Industry).**

23.11.2023
Svishtov

Reviewer:
(Assoc. Prof. Iskra Panteleeva, PhD)