



UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD ECONOMY

STATEMENT

From: Prof. Dr. Elenita Kirilova Velikova
UNWE, Department of "Economics of Tourism"
Scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

Regarding: Dissertation thesis for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.8 Economics, in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)" at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov

Author of the dissertation thesis: Yoana Angelova Konstantinova
Topic of the dissertation thesis: Development of Cultural-Historical Tourism through the Implementation of Innovations

Basis for presenting the statement: Participation in the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation thesis according to Order No. 317/10.04.2025 by the Rector of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov and the decision from the first meeting of the scientific jury held on 14.04.2025.

I. General presentation of the dissertation thesis:

The dissertation consists of a total of 221 pages of computer-typed text. Of these, 163 pages comprise the introduction, main body, and conclusion; 32 pages are the list of references; 19 pages are appendices; and one page is the declaration of originality and authenticity. The bibliography includes 151 literary sources in both Cyrillic and Latin alphabets (53 in Bulgarian, 95 in English, 2 in Italian, and 1 in Russian), 78 strategic documents, 18 legal sources, and 44 internet sources. The text contains 7 tables, 14 figures, and 7 appendices. Structurally, the dissertation is composed of three chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. These sections sequentially examine the conceptual aspects of cultural-historical tourism and innovations, the analytical approaches for studying the development of cultural-historical tourism with the aim of implementing innovations, and the measured potential for developing cultural-historical tourism through innovations in municipalities within the Danube region.

The topic of the dissertation is well formulated. Its significance and relevance are clearly justified, considering that it explores one of the most dynamically developing and strategically important areas of tourism – cultural-historical tourism – in the context of innovative approaches for its sustainable development. The Danube tourism region, which is the focus of the empirical research, is geographically the largest but economically the least developed tourism region in the country. This makes it particularly suitable for the application of new development models through innovation. The lack of a unified methodology for evaluating and implementing innovations in cultural-historical tourism at the local government level highlights the timeliness and necessity of the model proposed in the dissertation. The aim of the dissertation is "to theoretically and practically explore the potential for the development of cultural-historical tourism in municipalities from the Danube tourism region through the implementation of innovations, and to propose an appropriate

model with an algorithm for its measurement.” Based on this aim, six research tasks have been formulated.

The subject and object of the research are well defined, and the aim and research tasks are correctly formulated, accurately reflecting the doctoral candidate’s investigative work. The dissertation thesis – that “innovations play a key role in the sustainable development of cultural-historical tourism and, therefore, suitable models can be proposed for implementation in the municipalities of the Danube tourism region to support innovation in this type of tourism” – is well developed and substantiated. The strengths of the dissertation lie in the research methodology, the feasibility of its implementation, and the potential for generating new scientific knowledge and contributions. The limitations related to the subject and object of study, as well as the system of indicators and measures for analysis, are clearly outlined. The presentation and the literature used demonstrate that the doctoral candidate is well acquainted with a substantial number of academic sources. The structure of the dissertation merits a very good evaluation.

II. Evaluation of the form and content of the dissertation thesis

The dissertation outlines a number of advantages that are both scientific and practically applicable. The selected research problem – the implementation of innovations in cultural-historical tourism at the local level – is timely, relevant, and distinctly practice-oriented. There is a genuine need for scholarly research in this area, particularly concerning Bulgarian municipalities, where cultural and historical resources are abundant but underutilized. The author justifies the relevance of the topic through an analysis of strategic documents, European trends, and internal challenges related to cultural tourism and local development. The problem is clearly defined, conceptually grounded, and thoroughly explored using contemporary methods and models. The two original models developed by the author – one for measuring potential and the other for implementing innovations in cultural-historical tourism – are both innovative and contributory. They address the need for operational tools at the local level.

The dissertation is presented in a clear, academic, and coherent style, with well-structured scientific language. The terminology is accurate, and the concepts are clearly defined. The methodological tools developed enable doctoral candidate Konstantinova to achieve the main objective of the dissertation and to address the stated research tasks. The volume of the dissertation fully complies with the requirements for a doctoral thesis, with each chapter building logically upon the previous one. The applied research toolkit is diverse and appropriate, including induction and deduction, critical analysis, SWOT analysis, Likert scale, empirical research through surveys and interviews, as well as original models. The methodological approaches are well-founded, and the interpretation of the results is analytical and convincing.

The abstract accurately presents the structure, objectives, main theses, and results of the dissertation. It describes both the theoretical foundations and the developed models, as well as the empirical findings and conclusions drawn. The summaries and figures included in the abstract appropriately reflect the content of the dissertation. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the abstract is a comprehensive and reliable document that conveys the essence, structure, and key contributions of the research. It is developed in a volume of 44 pages.

In terms of type and number, the presented publications correspond to those listed by the doctoral candidate in the attached list. A total of four publications are presented – two articles and two conference papers. I believe that these publications realistically reflect the candidate’s achievements and are sufficiently representative to communicate the results to the academic community and relevant professional circles.

III. Scientific and practical-applied contributions of the dissertation thesis

The dissertation presents a number of contributions of both scientific and practical-applied significance. I accept the list of contributions provided by doctoral candidate Konstantinova and consider her self-assessment to be accurate. From the perspective of overall scientific contribution, the work is notable for its interdisciplinary approach, combining economics, tourism, innovation management, and public policy, as well as for its proposals of practically applicable models that could be adapted to other regions of the country.

IV. Questions regarding the dissertation thesis

For the purpose of a thorough and well-founded defense, I would like to ask the following question to the doctoral candidate: In which areas – marketing, technological, or managerial – do you believe Bulgarian municipalities are the least prepared for implementing innovations?

V. Summary evaluation of the dissertation thesis and conclusion

The dissertation thesis sets clear objectives and tasks, which PhD candidate Konstantinova has undoubtedly achieved and fulfilled. The analyses are accurate, the recommendations are well-founded, and they stem from the results of the research. The PhD candidate demonstrates skills in conducting thorough and well-reasoned analysis, making summaries, and critical thinking. The analyzed dissertation represents a creative achievement, which in terms of subject matter, theoretical generalizations, conclusions, and recommendations has undeniable significance for the theory and practice of the restaurant industry.

All this gives me grounds to recommend to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to award Yoana Angelova Konstantinova the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism),” professional field 3.8 Economics.

Date: 06.05.2025

Prepared by:
(Prof. Dr. Elenita Velikova)