



**Academy of Economics "Dimitar A. Tsenov" – Svishtov**  
Faculty of Finance  
Department of General Economic Theory

С.А. "Д.А. ТЕНОВ" - СВИШТОВ  
Вх № 93.00-30/19.05.2021

**REVIEW**

**for obtaining an educational and scientific degree „Doctor“** in the professional field 3.8. „Economics“ in the doctoral program „Political Economy“.

**Reviewer: Prof. Yordan Ivanov Vasilev, Ph.D., „D. A. Tsenov“** Academy of Economics – Svishtov, Faculty of Finance, Department of General Economic Theory, scientific speciality „Political Economy”

**Author of the dissertation: Tanya Ivanova Risemova**, full-time doctoral student in the doctoral program „Political Economy“ at the „Department of General Economic Theory“ at the Academy of Economics „D. A. Tsenov“, deducted with the right to defense according to p. № 209 / 29.04.2021.

**Topic of the dissertation:** „Socio-economic development of the districts on the Bulgarian Danube coast - state and prospects“

**Scientific adviser:** Assoc. Prof. Lyudmil Ivanov Nestorov Ph.D.

**Reason for writing the review:** Order 209 / 29.04.2021 of the Rector of the Academy of Economics „D. A. Tsenov“ - Svishtov. The review is prepared in accordance with the sample structure of a review for obtaining the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ in „D. A. Tsenov“ Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

**I. General characteristics of dissertation**

The dissertation is 187 pages long and consists of: list of abbreviations used (1 page), introduction (9 pages), first chapter (31 pages), second chapter (54 pages), third chapter (54 pages), conclusion (5 pages), references (12 pages) and appendices (20 pages). The list of used literature includes 108 sources, of which 42 in Bulgarian, 17 foreign and 49 websites. In support of the exhibition are included 31 tables, 35 graphs and 3 figures. Outside the main text, 27 applications have been developed, located in a volume of 20 pages.

The dissertation plan is logically constructed and filled with content. The research is based on the deductive approach with the development of the problem from the general to the particular - first the theoretical aspects of growth and development are considered. Then the author dwells on the problems of socio-economic development of the districts on **the**

**Bulgarian Danube coast** and in the third chapter the prospects for the socio-economic development of the districts on the Bulgarian Danube coast are outlined.

**The object and the subject** in the development are correctly and clearly outlined.

**The object** of development is the Bulgarian Danube coast, including seven districts and twenty-three municipalities with direct access to the Danube.

**The subject of the research** is the socio-economic development of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast.

The main goal of this dissertation is to study the state of the areas along the Bulgarian Danube coast, through a detailed analysis for the period 2007-2019 and to highlight the prospects for their development.

To achieve this goal, the author sets the following main tasks:

1. Study of modern theories of socio-economic development;
2. Research and analysis of the state, trends and available potential of the studied areas;
3. Preparation of an analysis showing the socio-economic problems of the Bulgarian Danube coast;
4. Derivation of the perspectives for development of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast.

**The research thesis** that the author defends is that:

**The available potential and the opportunities for development of the districts on the Bulgarian Danube coast are the main preconditions for solving their socio-economic problems.**

The research also imposes some restrictions on the object, subject and period:

1. Territorial restriction - selection of seven Bulgarian districts with direct access to the Danube River and the municipalities in them.
2. Time limit - the socio-economic analysis of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast, covers the period 2007-2019 and was made at the end of 2020, i.e. at the end of the programming period 2014 – 2020.
3. The analysis is carried out on the basis of strategic documents, which determine the prospects for development of the areas along the Bulgarian Danube coast, which does not claim to be exhaustive.
4. The socio-economic analysis of the districts on the Bulgarian Danube coast does not include the indicators: security and justice, local taxes and fees, local municipal budgets and the state of local administration, as most of the data at the municipal level are difficult to access or missing. The environment and the risk of natural disasters, energy and water



infrastructure, technological development, innovation, telecommunications, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources are not included.

The methodological tools used to carry out the empirical research cover a set of different research methods:

***Multifactor analysis***, which is applied to highlight the factors that determine the dynamics of economic and social indicators characterizing the state of the Bulgarian Danube coast.

***Comparative analysis*** of the socio-economic development of the Bulgarian Danube coast to highlight the internal and regional differences.

***Documentary analysis*** - analysis of existing strategic documents at national and European level.

***Cluster analysis***, through SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Sciences). The areas in the Bulgarian Danube coast are grouped on the basis of the similarity between them. The empirical data base contains three clusters - developing, middle development and lagging areas.

***SWOT analysis***, which presents the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the areas along the Bulgarian Danube coast, in order to outline the prospects for their socio-economic development.

For convincing and probative power of the analysis in the dissertation are used - diagrams, tables, graphs, figures through the use of MS Office programs - Word and Excel.

### **Presentation of PhD student Tanya Ivanova Risemova**

Tanya Ivanova Risemova was born on July 30, 1984 in the town of Svishtov. She graduated from the Dimitar Hadzhiyasilev State Trade High School with a degree in Banking in 2003. In 2007 she graduated with a bachelor's degree in Economics of Cooperatives and a second degree in Accounting and Control, and in 2009 received a master's degree in „Financial Management“ at the Academy of Economics „D. A. Tsenov“ - Svishtov. During her training she completed the following specializations: „Administrative Services“, „Currency Cashier“, „Organization and Management of Tourism“.

After obtaining a bachelor's degree, she worked for a short time in the banking sector and as a mobile operator. Her interests in the field of accounting and tourism lead her to the position of "Cost Control" (inspector, commodity control) in large hotel chains such as Alexandria Hotels, Pearl Tourist, CSIF Holding and Green life Resorts.

By order №506 / 01.06.2018 Tanya Ivanova Risemova was calculated in a regular doctoral program, subsidized by the state in the professional field 3.8. „Economics“, doctoral program „Political Economy“ at the „Department of General Economic Theory“, with supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ludmil Nestorov and with a term of study of 3 years. The doctoral student must participate in three jubilee international conferences and in one doctoral scientific session.

By order 209 / 29.04.2021, on the grounds of art. 70, para. 3 and para. 5 of PRAS in SA „D. A. Tsenov“ Svishtov, decisions of the Department Council of the „Department of General Economic Theory“ (Protocol №8 / 11.03.2021, Protocol №9 / 25.03.2021 and Protocol №10 / 08.04.2021) and decisions of the Faculty of Finance (Minutes №7 / 27.04.2021) at SA „D. A. Tsenov“ the composition of the scientific jury was approved and a public defense was scheduled for July 15, 2021.

Thanks to her activity and interests, the doctoral student has excellent organizational qualities and focuses on building and developing her social skills and professional competencies.

## **II. Evaluation of the form and content of the dissertation**

A positive assessment should be given for the chosen by the doctoral student, supervisor and member of the Department topic and for its relevance.

Under the influence of the changes in the socio-economic development of the country, after its accession to the European Union, there is a clear trend for socio-economic development of Bulgaria, including the areas of the **Bulgarian Danube Coast (BDC)**.

A current socio-economic problem is the search for solutions to overcome the interregional and intra-regional differences between the districts that have access to the BDC. Based on the condition and the available potential, the prospects for development are determined. The available potential is the strength of the areas, which include: natural resources, historical and cultural heritage and traditions. Weaknesses are related to the problems that need to be overcome. These include demographic problems, labor market problems, education and hospital problems, problems with missing transport links. The region, within the defined boundaries, has not been the subject of a comprehensive study in the economic literature.

The development of the Bulgarian Danube coast depends on the establishment of the available potential, the problems related to the socio-economic indicators and the perspectives for their solution. Proper identification of the problems will help not only for its socio-



economic development, but also for the reduction of regional disparities between Northern and Southern Bulgaria. This determines the need for such an ongoing study. The development of the Bulgarian Danube coast is important for the whole of Bulgaria, for the Balkan Peninsula and for the European Union, as well as for its place in the Danube hyper region.

The development follows the traditional composition and has a sufficient volume.

**The introduction** discusses the main directions of the research, correctly substantiates its theoretical and methodological basis, clearly outlines the object, subject, research thesis, goal and tasks that must be solved to achieve the goal and to prove the thesis. In addition to these main elements of the dissertation, the choice of the object of study is well argued in the introduction. The limitations of the study are also noted.

**The first chapter** is developed in a volume of 31 countries and is structured in five paragraphs of a theoretical nature. The connection between the concepts of "development" and "growth" is considered. A comparison is made between "economic" and "socio-economic" development. The author analyzes the views of various economic schools in this direction and sees them in great detail and skill. Special attention is paid to the specifics of understanding regional and local economic development and indicators of socio-economic development. As a transition to the second chapter, the last point of this chapter ends with a description of the Danube River as a factor for socio-economic development of BDC.

**The second chapter** is developed in a volume of 54 pages and is structured in six paragraphs, which deal with the problems of socio-economic development of the BDC districts - demographic problems, problems in education, health and culture, labor market dynamics, income and living conditions, the development of entrepreneurship and the state of investments, transport infrastructure and tourism. It is concluded that the main problem of the socio-economic development of BDC is the demographic and other problems for these areas stem from it. The lack of a motorway is also one of BDC's key problems, although three European transport corridors pass through it.

After the problems are pointed out in great depth, with rich illustrative material, in the next chapter the perspectives for socio-economic development of the BDK districts are outlined.

**Chapter three** is developed in a volume of 53 pages and is structured in six paragraphs.

After a description of the socio-economic development of Bulgaria as a result of its accession to the EU, the districts and municipalities along the BDC with access to the Danube in them are grouped through a detailed cluster analysis. The basic indicators are taken into account:

population, unemployment rate, average annual salary of employees and labor relations, relative share of employees in industry to the total number of employees, etc. The aim of this group is to create three clusters defining the areas as developed (in which there are favorable conditions for development), middle-developed (with less opportunities for development) and lagging behind. Socio-economic development efforts must focus on areas that fall behind. All programs and measures must be linked to these areas in order to improve their socio-economic development. It is established that developed districts are Ruse and Veliko Tarnovo, middle developed districts are Pleven, Vratsa, Montana, Silistra. The district with the most unfavorable values is Vidin district and it is it that falls into the last third cluster, as lagging behind.

In order to outline the perspectives for socio-economic development of the BDC districts, through the strengths and weaknesses, perspectives and threats, a SWOT analysis is used.

The potential of the BDC districts is related to the geographical location, relief, good climatic conditions, fertile agricultural land. Development prospects refer to certain advantages that have a significant contribution to accelerating the socio-economic development of the BDC districts. They are grouped on the basis of policies and strategic objectives in accordance with priorities in the fields of infrastructure, education, health, agriculture, regional competitiveness and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The conclusion synthesizes the achieved positive results, the unsolved and unsolved problems and formulates ten generalizing conclusions.

There are no repetitions and significant deviations from the topic in the dissertation and she passed a test according to the „Antiplagiarism” system, where no significant deviations were noted. I also did not find any borrowings and I believe that the text is copyrighted and the research is original, despite the numerous statistical references.

The empirical information is in sufficient quantity, skillfully selected, presented and formed in 31 tables, 5 figures and 35 graphs. This helps to facilitate the perception of the doctoral student's ideas and their argumentation.

The author, despite some incompleteness in the noted literature on the dissertation, shows a fairly broad awareness of the topic and a good knowledge of the literature indicated by her. The sources used are 108 and are cited in good faith, which shows that the doctoral student uses them to upgrade knowledge.



The abstract is of sufficient volume, accurately and clearly reflects the content of the dissertation. In addition, it also includes: a reference to the contributions to the dissertation, a declaration of originality and authenticity and a list of publications related to the dissertation.

### **III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions**

The dissertation definitely has scientific merits. They can be conditionally summarized and reduced to the following:

1. The condition of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast with an outlet to the Danube River and their socio-economic development have been assessed.
2. The areas along the Bulgarian Danube coast with access to the Danube River are grouped on the basis of an original cluster analysis of developed, middle-developed and lagging behind, which gives an opportunity to outline their specific problems.
3. The strengths and weaknesses of the studied areas are brought to the fore and the opportunities and threats for their development are identified.
4. The perspectives for socio-economic development of the researched areas are outlined and concrete proposals are made for limiting the problems found in them.

### **IV. Critical notes, questions and recommendations on the dissertation**

With regard to the dissertation, the main presentation and the author's thesis and argumentation, I have no significant critical remarks and recommendations. Along with the prominent positive aspects, the development has some specific features that do not diminish its merits in the least. There are minor deviations and descriptive nature in certain parts of the presentation, but this is inevitable given the content of the study. The above remarks are not of such importance as to belittle the author's achievements, her ability to carry out independent scientific research, to systematize and to give solutions to specific problems. Despite the comprehensiveness of the presentation, I would like to hear from the doctoral student her answer to the following slightly more general question:

**Are the natural resources sufficient for the development of BDC and how do you see the positive aspects of a special policy or the adoption of even a special law for the development of municipalities with access to BDC?**

### **V. Summary conclusion and opinion**

The presented dissertation is an independent study that requires from its author a wealth of knowledge in regional economics, finance, sociology, statistics, analysis and more areas.

The goal has been achieved, the set scientific tasks have been fulfilled and the research thesis has been proven. Having in mind all this and the outlined merits of a contributory nature. I consider that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Act on Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation. In addition, the additional report shows that the doctoral student has the required number of publications - 1 article and 3 scientific reports and meets the minimum requirements for obtaining ONS „Doctor“. Therefore, I propose to the scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree of Doctor of Tanya Ivanova Risemova in the scientific specialty „Political Economy“.

18.05.2021

Svishtov

Signature:

(Prof. Yordan Vasilev, PhD)