

OPINION

of a member of the scientific jury for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" within the doctoral programme „Political Economy“ at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics

Author of the statement of opinion: assoc. prof. Milen Velchev Velev, PhD, Prof. Dr Asen Zlatarov University - Burgas

Author of the dissertation: Tanya Ivanova Risemova, D010218196

Topic of the dissertation: „Socio-economic development of the regions along the Bulgarian bank of the Danube River - current state and prospects“

Scientific consultant: assoc. prof. Lyudmil Nestorov, PhD

I. General presentation of the dissertation

The present statement of opinion has been prepared by virtue of Order № 209/29.04.2021 of the Rector of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov, pursuant to article 70, paragraph 3 and paragraph 5 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov and resolutions of the Faculty of Finance (Minutes № 7/27.04.2021).

The research paper covers a total of 187 pages. It consists of an introduction, a main body of three chapters, a conclusion, a list of the abbreviations used, a reference list and 27 appendices. The main body includes 31 tables, 35 graphs and 3 figures.

108 **literature and information** sources have been used in writing this work, of which 42 in Bulgarian, 17 in foreign languages (English and Russian) and 49 Internet resources. The scientific literature used reflects fairly comprehensively the research in the field of the socio-economic development of the regions along the Bulgarian section of the Danube.

The investigated scientific issue is indisputably significant and relevant. The relevance pertains to the fact that the region has not been the subject of an overall investigation aiming to outline the vision for its future. An analysis of the problems is useful for both the socio-economic development of these areas and the decrease in inter-regional and intra-regional differences between the regions. The development of the Bulgarian bank of the Danube River is important to the whole of Bulgaria, to the Balkan Peninsula and the European Union as well as to its place in the Danube Hyper-Region.

The aim of the research work is accurately and clearly formulated - to investigate the current state of the regions along the Bulgarian bank of the Danube by means of a detailed socio-economic analysis for the period 2007-2019 and to delineate the prospects of their development. In order to achieve this aim the author has set herself four correctly defined research **tasks**.

The object, subject, time and territorial scope of the research are defined correctly. **The object of the research** is the Bulgarian section of the Danube River, which includes seven provinces and twenty-three municipalities with a direct outlet on the Danube, and **the subject of the research** is the socio-economic development of the regions along the Bulgarian bank of the Danube.

The research thesis says that the existing potential and possibilities for development of the regions along the Bulgarian section of the Danube River are the main prerequisites for solving their socio-economic problems.

The research work has made use of suitable **methodology**, the statistical methods have been used correctly with the requirements for their application and interpretation being fulfilled. The doctoral candidate has applied induction and deduction, descriptive, multiple factor, comparative, documentary, cluster, SWOT analyses, etc. Based on the dissertation four single-author publications have been made, including one article and three reports, published in journals and compendiums with scientific review, for the period 2019-2020. The publications presented are directly related to the topic of the research paper and reflect part of the results obtained in the dissertation.

The limitations of the research have been defined correctly, which enables the author to achieve the main objective and to prove the research thesis.

II. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation.

The **structure** of the dissertation is characterized by balance, consistency and logical coherence. The dissertation is distinguished by a clear scientific writing style, the scientific terminology is used correctly, with the necessary knowledge of its essence and content.

Chapter one of the dissertation is dedicated to the theoretical and methodological approaches to socio-economic development. In it the author clarifies the essence of the socio-economic development and the differences between economic development and economic growth. Some of the contemporary theories of socio-economic development and the corresponding indices have been examined. The doctoral candidate analyzes the influence of the Danube River on the socio-economic development of the regions being considered.

Chapter two deals with the main problems of the socio-economic development of the regions along the Bulgarian section of the Danube River. The problems of demography, education, health care and culture as well as the labour market dynamics have been analyzed. The incomes and living conditions, the development of entrepreneurship, the current state of investment, transport infrastructure and tourism have been studied.

Chapter three is entitled „Prospects of socio-economic development of the regions along the Bulgarian section of the Danube River“. It provides an analysis of the socio-economic development of Bulgaria after its accession to the EU. It pays attention to the enhancing of the inter-regional disproportions regarding the provinces along the Bulgarian bank of the Danube. The provinces along the Bulgarian bank of the Danube and their municipalities with an outlet on the Danube have been grouped by means of the cluster analysis with the purpose of creating three clusters, defining the provinces as developed (with favourable conditions for development available), of medium development (with smaller possibilities for development) and lagging in development. A SWOT analysis of the provinces along the Bulgarian bank of the Danube has been made. The priorities for development and strategic goals have been formulated. The role of the LEADER and CLLD (community-led local development) approaches to the development of the Bulgarian Danube bank has been viewed. The prospects of development of the provinces along the Bulgarian section of the Danube have been indicated.

The author's summary of the dissertation comprises 42 pages. Reference sections with the main contribution moments in the dissertation and the fulfillment of the national minimum requirements as well as a list of publications and a declaration of originality and authenticity are appended at the end of the summary. The author's summary contains the necessary elements and information corresponding to the content of the dissertation.

III. Contributions of the dissertation to science and applied science.

The doctoral candidate has specified four scientific contributions in the dissertation. The current state of the provinces along the Bulgarian section of the Danube with an outlet on the river and their socio-economic development have been assessed. On the basis of the cluster analysis applied, the provinces have been grouped as developed, medium-developed and lagging in development, which provides an opportunity to outline their concrete problems more clearly and to find adequate solutions. By means of the SWOT analysis performed, the strengths and weaknesses of the investigated provinces are brought out and the opportunities and threats to their development are identified, on the basis of which the guidelines for the necessary impacts are determined. The prospects of socio-economic development are outlined and specific suggestions are made to restrict the problems observed in them. I accept and give my positive assessment of the contributions to science and applied science proposed by the author. As a whole, by using the appropriate scientific methods the doctoral candidate has succeeded in achieving the goals and tasks set and proving the formulated research thesis convincingly.

IV. Critical notes and recommendations

I have no substantial critical notes on the dissertation. I think there are no inaccuracies or contradictions in it. I would recommend that in the future the doctoral candidate should continue and take her research activities further, analyzing the influence of still other factors on the socio-economic development of the provinces along the Bulgarian section of the Danube River. (For instance, from a scientific point of view, the issue of the possible influence of the pandemic on the socio-economic development of these provinces would be interesting.) The results achieved are to be published in Bulgarian and international indexed and refereed research journals.

V. Summarized assessment of the dissertation and conclusion

In summary, I express the opinion that the results obtained in the dissertation contain significant scientific contributions to the economic theory and practice. All requirements of the Law on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the related regulations for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" are fulfilled.

In view of the above stated I confidently give my **positive assessment** of the dissertation, submitted for defense, on the topic: „**SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROVINCES ALONG THE BULGARIAN BANK OF THE DANUBE RIVER-CURRENT STATE AND PROSPECTS**” and propose to the honourable scientific jury to award its author **TANYA IVANOVA RISEMOVA** the educational and scientific degree “doctor” in the area of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences“, professional field 3.8. “Economics”, scientific specialty “Political economy”

31.05.2021.
Burgas

assoc. prof. ~~/~~ Milen Veleev, PhD
member of the scientific jury