

OPINION

Opinion prepared by: Assoc. Prof. Ognyan Tsvyatkov Markov, PhD, "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics – Svishtov, Department of General Economic Theory, professional field: 3.8. "Economics", scientific specialization: "Political Economy", **member of the scientific jury** according to Order № 209/29.04.2021 of the Rector of "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics for initiating a public defense of doctoral thesis procedure

Author of the doctoral thesis: Tanya Ivanova Risemova, a full-time PhD student at the Department of General Economic Theory, **D010218196**

Topic of the doctoral thesis: "Socio-economic development of the districts on the Bulgarian Danube coast – state and prospects"

I. General presentation of the doctoral thesis

The **research problem** of the doctoral thesis is the Bulgarian Danube coast which includes seven districts and twenty-three municipalities, with direct access to the Danube River. The **research area** of the study is the socio-economic development of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast.

The proposed doctoral thesis has a total **volume** of 187 standard pages, and consists of an introduction, a body structured in three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and appendices. The body is illustrated by 31 tables, 35 graphs and 3 figures. The textual and visual contents are balanced, which helps to build a comprehensive vision of the studied issues.

The **structure** of the doctoral thesis is balanced and logically consistent. A variety of research methods and approaches are used. The research thesis, objective and tasks respond directly to the study and find their verification in the results. The restrictions introduced are well justified and allow for in-depth research.

The **literature** used and cited is directly related to the issues elaborated on. It is cited properly and the rules of scientific ethics are followed. The bibliography lists 108 sources, of which 42 in Bulgarian, 17 in a foreign language and 49 internet resources.

To confirm the body of the doctoral thesis, the PhD student presents 27 **appendices** comprising 20 pages.

II. Assessment of the form and content of the doctoral thesis

The topic of the doctoral thesis is relevant, well-formulated and is of interest to both science and business practice. The **topical issues** related to the socio-economic development of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast are stated clearly, properly and are well-argued by the PhD student. The main **objective** of the doctoral thesis is to study the state of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast through a detailed socio-economic analysis for the 2007-2019 period and to highlight the prospects for their development. The author defends the **thesis** that the available potential and opportunities for developing the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast are the main prerequisites for solving their socio-economic problems.

The body of the doctoral thesis is structured by using appropriate **linguistic means** of the scientific written style. In this way, the concepts, processes and regularities manifesting in the field of the scientific problem are accurately, clearly and logically described and explained. The necessary consistency and analytical nature of the exposition are achieved. No repetitions, logical contradictions and disproportion of the parts are noticed. The statistical processing of the empirical data is properly done.

Chapter one presents the theoretical and methodological approaches to socio-economic development. Modern theories of socio-economic development are considered. The specifics of the understanding of regional and local development are indicated. The indicators for socio-economic development have been clarified. Emphasis is placed on the Danube River as a factor for socio-economic development.

The second chapter deals with the problems of the socio-economic development of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast. Demographic problems; problems in education, health and culture; labor market dynamics; income and living conditions; the development of entrepreneurship and investment status; the potential of transport infrastructure and tourism are analyzed.

The third chapter of the doctoral thesis places an emphasis on the prospects for socio-economic development of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast. A cluster analysis is made according to key development indicators, as well as a SWOT analysis of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast. Development priorities and strategic goals are set. The role of the LEADER approach and CLLD for development is considered. The prospects for developing the built-up areas along the Bulgarian Danube coast are outlined.

The conclusion summarizes the results and unresolved issues in relation to the socio-economic development of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast. The necessary summaries and conclusions are made, in accordance with the issues considered.

The **abstract** comprises 43 pages and fully and precisely reflects the content of the doctoral thesis and the achieved research results. It also indicates the publications on the doctoral thesis topic. The main points of the doctoral thesis find their publicity in 1 article and 3 papers published individually. They have been presented at scientific forums with international participation, which develops a reputation in the scientific community. A declaration of originality and authenticity also accompanies the doctoral thesis. The author has followed the rules of scientific ethics – originality of the scientific product, proper citation and reference, and reliability of the information provided, which is verified by a text check through the anti-plagiarism system in the higher education institution.

III. Scientific and applied contributions and practical significance of the doctoral thesis

The set research objectives and tasks have been fully achieved. The main scientific and applied contributions of the doctoral thesis may be expressed as:

1. Based on certain indicators, the state of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast, having access to the Danube River, and their socio-economic development are assessed.
2. Based on a cluster analysis, the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast having access to the Danube River are grouped into developed, medium-developed and lagging behind, which allows for a clearer delineation of their specific problems and finding adequate solutions.
3. The districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast are analyzed through SWOT analysis. Based on it, the strengths and weaknesses of the studied districts are brought to the fore, the opportunities and threats for their development are identified, on the basis of which the guidelines for the necessary impacts are determined.
4. The prospects for socio-economic development of the studied districts are outlined and specific proposals are made to limit the problems identified in them.

IV. Questions on the doctoral thesis

I have no significant critical notes and questions to the PhD student. My recommendation is to be more convinced when expressing and arguing her own author's opinions. My guidelines is to continue working on the topic of the doctoral thesis, to use the

created new formulations and views related to the socio-economic development of the built-up areas along the Bulgarian Danube coast and to strengthen the practical focus in her future developments.

V. A summarized assessment of the doctoral thesis and conclusion

The presented doctoral thesis of PhD student Tanya Ivanova Risemova on “Socio-economic development of the districts along the Bulgarian Danube coast – state and prospects” is a thorough and complete scientific work on a topical issue for the economic theory and practice. In its entirety, the doctoral thesis meets the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree ‘Doctor’ under the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. This gives me grounds for a high **positive assessment**. I also strongly recommend that the honorable Scientific Jury award the educational and scientific degree ‘Doctor’ under the doctoral programme ‘Political Economy’ to the PhD student Tanya Ivanova Risemova.

27.05.2021

Svishtov

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(Assoc. Prof. Ognyan Markov, PhD)