



UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD
ECONOMY



ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ВАРНА

Bx. No. PA20-492/28.03.2025r.

REVIEW

of dissertation

for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”,
according to a procedure, announced by the University of **Economics – Varna**

1. General information

Reviewer: Prof. D.Sc. Tanya Parusheva

UNWE – Sofia, Department “Economics of Tourism”

Field of Higher Education 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”

Professional Field 3.8. “Economics”

Scientific Specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism)”

Reason for writing the review: Order No RD-06-23/28.01.2025 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna for the appointment of a Scientific Jury and the decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 10.02.2025.

Author of the dissertation: Tihomir Vasilev Patarinski – full-time doctoral student in the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism” at the University of Economics – Varna

Topic of the dissertation: “Sustainable development of Varna Municipality as a tourist destination”

Research supervisor: Prof. Dr. Velina Ivancheva Kazandzhieva

2. Data about the dissertation student

Tihomir Patarinski graduated from the University of Economics – Varna, with a Bachelor’s degree in “Tourism” (2004 – 2008). He also obtained a Master’s degree in “Tourism” at the University of Economics – Varna (2008 – 2009).

His professional development began as an administrator at the “Azalea” Hotel, “St. St. Constantine and Elena” Resort. He has successively worked at the Varna Tourist Chamber and Varna Municipality. From 2022 to the present, he has been a tourism attaché in Germany and First Secretary at the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Berlin. He is a licensed tour guide and a member of the Union of Tour Guides in Bulgaria. He is fluent in German and English.

Tihomir Patarinski was enrolled in **full-time doctoral studies** by order No RD-17-407/02.03.2021 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna in the field of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”, professional direction 3.9. “Tourism”, under the doctoral program “Economics and Management (Tourism)” at the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism”, for a period of **3 (three) years**, starting from 01.03.2021 – 01.03.2024.

He completes the work specified in the individual plan. Successfully passes the doctoral exams as follows:

- Tourism Economics – Excellent (6.00);
- Research Methodology – Excellent (6.00);
- German Language – Excellent (6.00);
- Business Economics – Very Good (5.25).

During his doctoral studies, he led seminars on the subject “Regulation of International Tourism Business”. He participated in a scientific and applied research project on the topic: “Development of an Intelligent Tourist Destination '2030 (on the example of the Municipality of Varna)”.

During his studies as a doctoral student, Tihomir Patarinski was assessed with a **positive grade**. The dissertation was discussed at the Department Council of the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism. He was discharged with the right to defend by order No RD 17-61/01.03.2024 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna, effective from 01.03.2024.

A procedure for defense before a Scientific Jury has been opened, in accordance with Art. 31, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”.

3. General presentation of the dissertation work

The dissertation work of doctoral student **Tihomir Vassilev Patarinski** submitted for review, the abstract and the scientific publications related to it, are the result of an independent scientific study. **The relevance and significance** of the researched issues are highlighted in an argumentative and convincing manner. It is emphasized that tourism has a strong social, economic and environmental impact on the destination. The economic structure of the municipality of Varna has a clearly expressed tourist profile. It is necessary to rethink and strengthen the role of sustainable development of tourism in the municipality of Varna.

The object of research – “the harmonious functioning of the tourism system in the municipality of Varna, integrating various structural elements and dynamic interactions based on the principles of sustainable development” and *the subject of research* – “the sustainable development of a sea destination in accordance with current global trends for balanced progress of tourist destinations” are correctly distinguished.

The main goal is clearly and precisely defined: “based on a theoretical review and analysis of the characteristics of tourism in the regional economy of the municipality of Varna, to reveal the problems and determine the prospects for its sustainable development as a tourist destination”. The goal was achieved by solving **5 specific research tasks**.

The research thesis is appropriately formulated: “tourism management on the territory of Varna Municipality has specific implications in the socio-cultural, natural and especially in the economic sphere for increasing the efficiency and fairness of its long-term sustainable development”. **3 working hypotheses** are correctly defined.

The research toolkit includes the use of a complex of **research methods**: scientific analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, analog method, comparison, statistical method, SWOT analysis, questionnaire survey, expert assessments and others.

The main limitations in writing the dissertation relate to: *the large volume and fragmentation of research* on sustainable development and the *high differentiation and complexity of the tourism system* as an object of complex regulation and control. **The main problems** in the development are associated with *the differences in the methodology of collecting statistical data* for individual resources and *the high degree of subjectivity in many of the key indicators* for measuring the degree of sustainable tourism development in the destination. **The information provision** of the study was carried out through a systematic study of specialized scientific publications by Bulgarian and foreign authors.

The dissertation meets the requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

4. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation

The dissertation is 258 pages **long**. The main text is illustrated with 12 tables and 62 figures. **The structure** of the dissertation is based on a well-founded logic, consistency and connection between the problems treated. It consists of an introduction (8 pages), an exposition in four chapters (203 pages), a conclusion (3 pages) and used literature (9 pages). **The bibliography** includes 131 literary sources, of which 59 in Cyrillic, 72 in Latin and 34 specialized Internet sites. 7 appendices (25 pages) have been prepared for the dissertation.

Doctoral student Tihomir Patarinski is well acquainted with the theses and concepts of established authors on the researched problems, and successfully interprets them. The literary sources have been used **conscientiously and correctly**.

The style of the dissertation is concise and precise. The text is written in **scientific language**. The **content of the dissertation** indicates that doctoral student Tihomir Patarinski has carried out in-depth **scientific research** and very good **practical evidence** of the author's goals and objectives.

The **introduction** presents the logical framework of the presentation. The need for research into the sustainable development of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination is justified.

In the **first chapter** of the dissertation "**Theoretical Study of Sustainable Tourism Development**" the prerequisites for sustainable development of a tourist destination are examined. The research interest is focused on the evolution of the concept of sustainable tourism development. A special place is devoted to the characteristics and content of sustainable tourism.

In the **second chapter** of the dissertation "**Methodology and toolkit for sustainable tourism development at the municipal level**" models for sustainable tourism development are studied. A conceptual model for sustainable tourism development at the municipal level is presented. A methodology and research toolkit for assessing sustainable tourism development at the municipal level are developed.

In the **third chapter** of the dissertation work "**Analysis and research of the sustainable tourism development of the municipality of Varna**" an emphasis is placed on the conditions and factors for tourism development of the municipality of Varna. An in-depth study and assessment of the tourism development of the municipality of Varna have been carried out. The impacts of tourism on the sustainable development of the municipality of Varna have been analyzed. An assessment of the degree of sustainability of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination has been made.

In the **fourth chapter** of the dissertation "**Guidelines for improving the sustainable development of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination**", the trends and prospects for sustainable development of tourist destinations in times of crisis are examined. The problems and challenges facing the sustainable development of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination are revealed. Directions for optimizing the sustainable tourism development of the municipality of Varna are indicated. The emphasis is placed on the sustainable management of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination.

The conclusion summarizes the main analyses and conclusions related to the sustainable management of Varna Municipality as a tourist destination.

The highlighted scientific and applied scientific results represent an original contribution to science. They provide grounds for the conclusion that the main goal of the dissertation has been **achieved**. The research tasks set have been **fulfilled**. The research thesis has been **confirmed**. The first working hypothesis has been **rejected**, and the second and third have been **proven**.

In terms of structure and content, the dissertation corresponds to the requirements of Art. 34, para. 2 and para. 3 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”.

4.1. Evaluation of the abstract of the dissertation work

The abstract is **38 pages in Bulgarian** and **37 pages in English**. It correctly corresponds to the dissertation work and faithfully presents the researched problems in a synthesized form. **The lexical and stylistic characteristics of the text are well-maintained and precise**. It is composed of 5 parts, which include: 1). general characteristics of the dissertation work; 2). structure of the dissertation work; 3). brief presentation of the dissertation work; 4). reference to the contributions in the dissertation work; 5). list of publications on the dissertation work and declaration of originality.

5. Identification and assessment of scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation work

Doctoral student Tihomir Patarinski has **correctly formulated the contributions** in the dissertation. We assess the presented reference for the contributions as correct and realistically reflecting the achieved results.

In our opinion, the dissertation clearly highlights **scientific-applied and practical-applied contributions**, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Scientific-theoretical contributions

first – systematization and interpretation of theoretical statements on sustainable tourism development; theoretical analysis, characterization and periodization of the concept of SDR was carried out; a definition and guidelines for the application of the principles of sustainability in the context of the tourism industry at the regional level were developed;

second – an author’s methodology and tools for studying the sustainable development of tourism at the local (municipal) level were developed; a systemic model for sustainable tourism development at the municipal level was conceptualized, which is intended for

research in the field of destination management and is applicable in the development of concepts and programs for the development of the sector in individual regions and municipalities;

third – identification of key indicators: a system of indicators for measuring sustainability in tourism at the local level has been formulated with a focus on social, environmental, economic and management aspects;

2. Practical and applied contributions

fourth – analysis and assessment of the sustainability of the development of Varna Municipality as a tourist destination; empirical analysis of the tourism potential of the region, including natural, cultural and infrastructure resources;

fifth – outlining the opportunities for the development of Varna Municipality as a destination for sustainable tourism: revealing the main challenges facing the sustainable development of the municipality and adapting modern planning models by including the specific characteristics of Varna Municipality in the international frameworks for tourism development.

6. Publications and participation in scientific forums

Doctoral student Tihomir Patarinski has **3 scientific publications** directly related to the topic of the dissertation. He has achieved points in the group of indicators “G”, as follows: *Articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review and in edited collective volumes.*

- **2 scientific articles**, independent, *in English*, indexed in secondary databases;
- **1 scientific report**, independent, *in Bulgarian*, included in the National Reference List.

The report was printed in a collection of papers from participation in a scientific forum, as follows:

- 1). Modern tourism. Smart solutions for the development of tourism in Bulgaria in the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, Varna, 2021.

The publications of doctoral student Tihomir Patarinski are **representative** and ensure sufficient dissemination of the results of the study among the academic community and interested circles in the tourism business.

*The scientific production dedicated to the treated issues **meets the minimum national requirements** for awarding the ESD “Doctor”, according to Art. 2b para. 2 and 3 of the LDASRB and Art. 35, para. 1, item 4 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic*

7. Confirmed or unconfirmed plagiarism in the dissertation or abstract

There is no proven plagiarism in the dissertation and the abstract.

8. Critical notes and recommendations

Some notes may be made to the dissertation that would improve the overall presentation of the work.

1. It is appropriate to emphasize the practical nature of market research in the field of sustainable tourism development in order to embed the basic principles in local policy.

2. In order to enrich the results, the study should be expanded to the social aspects of sustainable development and how the local community perceives the relevant initiatives and their economic prospects for the destinations.

The mentioned notes do not reduce the merits of the study and do not affect the general positive assessment of the dissertation work, as an independent study with indisputable scientific and scientific-applied contributions.

I would recommend that, in order to supplement the expertise and knowledge in this dynamically developing field, doctoral student Tihomir Patarinski continue his research focused on the development of tourist destinations in the context of the various aspects of sustainability.

9. Questions for the dissertation student

The researched issues raise the following questions for worthy defense:

1. What approaches and strategies can stimulate greater interest in sustainable tourism development among tourists, businesses and academics?

2. What are the most important challenges related to the results of the dissertation work and what are the measures to overcome them?

10. Conclusion

I confidently give a **positive assessment** of the dissertation on the topic “Sustainable development of Varna Municipality as a tourist destination”. I confirm that it fully **complies with the requirements** of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”.

The dissertation is a **scientific and applied solution** to a real practical problem of public importance. The doctoral student possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge in the specialty "Tourism" and the ability to conduct independent scientific research.

I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to make a **decision "FOR"** the awarding of the **Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor"** in the field of higher education **3. "Social, Economic and Legal Sciences"**, professional field **3.9. "Tourism"**, scientific specialty **"Economics and Management (Tourism)"** to **TIHOMIR VASILEV PATARINSKI** – full-time doctoral student in the Department of "Economics and Organization of Tourism" at the Faculty of "Management" at the University of Economics – Varna.

Sofia,
25.03.2025.

REVIEWER:

(Prof. D.Sc. Tanya Parusheva)

Заличена информация съгласно
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679

REVIEW

By: Prof. Stoyan Petkov Marinov, PhD
Department of Economics of Tourism Management, University of Economics-
Varna, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (tourism)"

In reference to: dissertation for awarding educational and scientific degree "**PhD**" in Area of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences. Professional division: 3.9. Tourism. Scientific specialty: "Economics and Management (tourism)" in UE-Varna.

Author of dissertation: Tihomir Vasilev Patarinski

Topic of dissertation: „Sustainable development of the Municipality of Varna as a tourist destination”

Grounds for making the review: participation in the board of the scientific jury about defending the dissertation in compliance with Order № RD 06-23 from 28.01.2024 by the Rector of UE-Varna and decision of the scientific jury from its first meeting held on 10.02.2025.

1. Information about the author of the dissertation

Tihomir Patarinski graduated high school in the "Exarch Yosif I" High School of Languages in Lovech, profile German and English, in 2004. Between 2004 and 2009 he finished his Bachelor and Master EQD in "Tourism" in UE-Varna.

Tihomir Patarinski started his professional career at the job position "receptionist" in the "Asalia" hotel in the resort of "St. St. Konstantin and Helena". From 2008 to 2010 he worked as an organiser of tourism in the Regional tourist and information centre of the Varna chamber of tourism. In 2010 he worked in the Municipality of Varna where he took the following job positions: "chief expert of tourist activities" in the municipal Tourist information centre (TIC) (2010-2013); "head of TIC" (2013-2019); "head of the department of marketing, advertisement and analyses at the directorship of "Tourism" in the Municipality of Varna. Since 2022 Tihomir Patarinski has worked in Berlin as an attaché of tourism, part of the Ministry of tourism, in the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria. His position is "first secretary" in the diplomatic mission.

The PhD student was trained in the department of “Economics and organisation of tourism”, faculty of Management in UE-Varna, the PhD programme “Economics and Management (tourism)” in compliance with decision of the FC of the faculty of Management, protocol № 18/24.02.2021 and order № PД 17-407/02.03.2021 by the Rector of UE-Varna. The training was carried out full-time, financed by the state, from 01.03.2021 to 01.03.2024. The PhD student completed successfully his individual training plan, gathered the necessary number of credits, was written off and duly entitled the right to defend his doctoral degree in compliance with the decision of the FC of the faculty of Management, protocol № 9/27.02.2024 and order 17-61/27.02.2024 of the Rector of UE-Varna.

2. General presentation of the dissertation

The dissertation submitted by the PhD student Tihomir Patarinski is the result of an independent scientific research.

In the introduction the relevance and significance of the surveyed issues stand out with good argumentation in respect to the sustainable tourist development on the level of destination.

The **topic** of the research is correctly outlined – “the sustainable development of a maritime destination in compliance with the relevant global tendencies and strategies for a balanced progress of tourist sites”. The subject of research is formulated as “the harmonious functioning of a tourist system in the municipality of Varna, integrating various structural elements and dynamic interactions based on the principles of sustainable development”.

The paper serves a **significant and correctly formulated main objective** “on the ground of a theoretical review and analysis of the characteristics of tourism in the regional economy in the municipality of Varna to outline the issues and bring out the perspectives for its sustainable development as a tourist destination”. The goal of the research paper is well specified in **five research tasks** that predetermine the structure of the content as well: (1) revealing the essence and particularities of sustainable development; (2) studying the origin and development of the concept of sustainable development as a tool for overcoming the disbalance in a tourist destination; (3)

working out a method and choice of research tools for studying sustainable development on municipal level; (4) analysing and evaluating the sustainability of tourism in the municipality of Varna; (5) outlining guidelines for a future sustainable development of tourism in the municipality of Varna as an element of regional economy.

In the dissertation the **thesis** stands out that “managing tourism on the territory of the municipality of Varna has particular reflection in the natural, socio-cultural and especially the economic sphere for increasing the efficiency and justice of its long-term sustainable development”. For defending the main thesis of the dissertation **three significant hypotheses** are probed: Hypothesis 1: Mass tourism is compatible with the objectives and principles of sustainable development, Hypothesis 2: The concept of sustainable tourist development is not a threat, it is a chance for destination Varna to increase its competitiveness, Hypothesis 3: Sustainable tourism in the municipality of Varna is based on local characteristics and needs projected through the global principles and goals for developing the industry.

A suitable set of research tools is used which includes a historical and systematic approach, the method of analysis and synthesis, comparative method, the method of induction and deduction, analogy and comparison. There are applied empirical methods of questionnaire survey and expert assessment. The questionnaire method is focused on **two groups of respondents**: a) consumers and their expectations, attitudes and impressions from the destination and b) stakeholders – hoteliers, tour operators, tourist agencies, tourist organisations and educational institutions.

The dissertation meets the requirements of article 27, item 2 from the Regulations for applying the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

3. Appraisal of the structure and content of the dissertation

The volume of the dissertation is 258 pages. Its structure presents well-grounded logics, consistency and the issues researched are well bounded. The paper has introduction (8 pages), main body with four chapters (203 pages), conclusion (3

pages), references (9 pages) and 7 appendices (25 pages). A rich illustrative material is used – 12 tables and 62 figures.

The bibliographic apparatus includes 166 sources with 132 literary and 34 specialised internet sites.

The **style** of the dissertation is concise and accurate, its level of wording - quite high. The **content of the dissertation** proves that the PhD student Tihomir Patarinski has detailed knowledge of the issues of sustainable development of tourism on municipal level and has done a research with results that are structurally and logically written.

In reference to structure and content, the dissertation complies with the requirements of article 34, item 2 and item 3 of the Regulations for development of the academic staff in the University of Economics-Varna, Section II – Conditions and order for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “PhD”.

4. Scientific and scientific-and-applicable contributions in the dissertation

PhD student Tihomir Patarinski has achieved indisputable **contributions** in the dissertation as follows:

Firstly, systematization and critical interpretation of the theoretical notions concerning sustainable tourist development (chapter one).

Secondly, author’s methodology and tools for studying the sustainable development of tourism on local (municipal) level (chapter two).

Thirdly, analysis and assessment of the sustainability of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination (chapter three).

Fourthly, outlined opportunities for the development of the municipality of Varna as a destination for sustainable tourism (chapter four).

The outstanding scientific and scientific-and-applicable results are the author’s contribution in science. They give the necessary ground to conclude that the main goal of the dissertation has been achieved. The assigned research tasks have been accomplished. The research thesis has been confirmed by way of checking the hypotheses set (rejecting the first and confirming the second and third hypotheses).

5. Publications and participation in scientific events

Tihomir Patarinski submits 3 publications on the topic of the dissertation, including two articles of his own and a report. The submitted publications present significant results from the dissertation paper and ensure enough publicity.

The PhD student meets the qualitative requirements in article 35, item 1, p. 1-3 from the Regulations for development of the academic staff in the University of Economics-Varna and meets the minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree “PhD”, in compliance with article 26, item 2 and item 3 of the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

6. Assessment of the author review

The author has submitted a review in Bulgarian and English. The review meets the normative requirements and outlines the main structural parts of the dissertation paper.

7. Plagiarism found or not found in the dissertation paper or the author review

In compliance with the legal order, there is no plagiarism found in the dissertation.

8. Remarks and recommendations

I would recommend to Tihomir Patarinski to expand his research work on the topic with an emphasis on the organisational-and-managerial aspects of sustainable tourist development on the level of destination, municipal level in particular.

9. Questions to the PhD student

Aiming at a successful defence of the dissertation, I suggest that Tihomir Patarinski considers three questions:

First, which subject has to lead the process of sustainable tourist development of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination?

Second, would it be possible to improve the allocation of the collected tourist tax in the municipality of Varna into separate types of expenses for better sustainable development of the municipality as a destination?

Third, what is the significance of the position of the municipality of Varna on

the German outbound tourist market for the sustainable tourist development of the destination?

10. Conclusion

The dissertation is a scientific-and-applied solution of a real practical issue with social significance which has an effect on the sustainable tourist development. The PhD student has the necessary theoretical knowledge in the specialty “Economics and management (tourism)”, as well as capabilities to carry out independent research work.

The paper on the topic of “Sustainable development of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination” meets the requirements of LDAS in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for applying it and the Regulations for development of the academic staff in the University of Economics – Varna.

Hereby, I give my positive assessment and vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD, scientific specialty “Economics and management (tourism)” in professional trend 3.9 Tourism, to Tihomir Patarinski.

Varna

03.03.2025

Review made by:

(Prof. Stoyan Marinov, PhD)

Заличена информация съгласно
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/

67-