

SCIENTIFIC STATEMENT

By Assoc. Prof. PhD Krasimir Vladimirov Alexandrov

University of Plovdiv, Department of Tourism

about the dissertation work at **Tihomir Vasilev Patarinski**, full-time PhD student at the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism at the Varna University of Economics on "**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF VARNA MUNICIPALITY**

AS A TOURIST DESTINATION"

for the award of the degree PhD in the field of higher education 3. "Social, Economic and Legal Sciences", professional field 3.9. "Tourism", scientific speciality "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

1. Reason for writing the opinion.

Order No. RD-06-23/28.01.2025 of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna and decision of the Scientific Jury of 10.02.2025.

2. Candidate details.

Tihomir Vasilev Patarinski acquired his bachelor's degree and master's degree in Tourism at the University of Economics in Varna. It is evident from the presented creative CV that Tihomir Patarinski has gained solid experience in the tourism sector. Mainly in "Tourist Destination Management Organizations" at different levels.

3. General presentation of the thesis.

The dissertation of **Tihomir Vasilev Patarinski** is dedicated to the current issues of the role of tourism for social, economic and environmental impact in the destination. In this aspect, efforts to strengthen the role of sustainable tourism development are considered. The subject of the study is the problems of sustainable development of a maritime tourist destination. The object of the dissertation is the tourist system of Varna Municipality

The work is developed based on an extensive review of the available publications on the topic by Bulgarian and foreign authors, as well as by conducting an independent empirical study. The research methodology used by the candidate is in line with the set scientific goal and research objectives. Considering the characteristics of the dissertation, we can conclude that in terms of type, volume and attributes it meets the requirements of Art. 48, par. 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

4. Structure and content of the dissertation

The volume, structure and content of Tihomir Pytlasinski's dissertation are in accordance with the requirements of Article 56 of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna. The dissertation has a total length of 258 pages, including: introduction (8 pages); statement in four chapters (203 pages); conclusion (3 pages); references

used (9 pages). The list of references used consists of 166 titles, including 132 references and 34 internet sources. There are 7 appendices (25 pages) to the thesis.

Summarizing the existing works on the topic, the author skilfully shows his own approach in formulating the aim and methods of the present study. He clearly and firmly defines the main thesis, namely that *tourism management in the territory of the municipality of Varna has concrete implications in the socio-cultural, natural and especially in the economic sphere to increase the efficiency, and equity of its long-term sustainable development*". To prove the thesis, the author uses three working hypotheses. The research toolkit is rich: scientific analysis and synthesis to determine the current state of the destination and the functional interrelationships between its constituent elements; induction and deduction method to derive general valid dependencies based on concrete examples and application of established practices; analogical method to search for common features with other similar destinations; comparison - to compare quantitative and qualitative characteristics and form conclusions; statistical method, SWOT analysis, survey, expert evaluations, etc

An empirical study has been conducted on the degree of sustainability of Varna Municipality as a tourist destination: one for the consumers with their expectations, attitudes and impressions of the destination; another among the stakeholders - hoteliers, tour operators, travel agencies, industry organizations, institutions and educational institutions. The data has been transformed into concrete practical and applied views for effective management and sustainable development of Varna destination, and achieving several positive effects.

The results are systematized and can be presented as follows: the concept of SDM is not perceived as a threat, but as a means for long term development and prolonging the life cycle of the destination in a positive direction; transformation is not perceived as a limitation and reduction of visitor volumes, but as an opportunity and the introduction of new business models. The need for an up-to-date legal and regulatory framework in line with global SDGs; the concept of 'sustainability' has the potential to contribute to overcoming long-standing problems associated with the non-structural nature of development: staffing, efficient use of accommodation facilities and increasing the economic benefits of tourism for local people.

The dissertation is presented in a form that meets all the requirements for this type of scientific work. It presents a scientific and applied solution to a real problem concerning the sustainable development of a marine tourist destination. We believe that the structure and content of the dissertation of Tihomir Vasilev Pytlasinski meet the requirements of the RASD of the University of Economics - Varna.

The candidate shall submit an abstract of 38 pages. It sufficiently reflects the scientific work developed. The attached list of publications on the thesis contains the required number of titles for the degree of Doctor of Education and Research.

5. Publications and participation in scientific forums.

The PhD student presents three independent publications on the thesis, two in English and one in Bulgarian. The topics of the publications are related to the main issues of the dissertation research and meet the minimum national requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "PhD", according to Art. 3 of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria.

With the materials thus provided for the defence of the dissertation of Tihomir Patarinski, no plagiarism was found in the dissertation, its publications and the abstract. No use of incorrect data or incorrect reference to other scientific works was found.

6. Scientific and applied contributions in the dissertation.

The original *scientific contribution* is the development of a systematic model for sustainable tourism development at municipal level, 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.

As contributions of scientific and applied nature can be mentioned:

- Analysis and assessment of the sustainability of the development of Varna municipality as a tourist destination: empirical analysis of the tourist potential of the region, including natural, cultural and infrastructural resources.
- Outlining the opportunities for the development of Varna Municipality as a destination for sustainable tourism: revealing the main challenges for the sustainable development of the municipality and adapting modern planning models by incorporating the specific characteristics of Varna Municipality into the international framework for tourism development.

7. Critical comments and recommendations.

I recommend the PhD student to continue to work on the issues of sustainable development of destinations and opportunities for increasing the complex quality, to present the results in more publications and scientifically applied models.

8. Conclusion.

The developed dissertation shows that **Tihomir Vasilev Patarinski** has knowledge of scientific achievements in tourism theory and practice. He can conduct independent scientific research in the field of tourism using modern scientific methods and approaches. The presented dissertation contains contributions both in theoretical-methodological and applied aspects and can be used for sustainable development of marine tourist destinations.

The merits of the dissertation work give me reason to give a positive evaluation and to vote for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to **Tihomir Vasilev Patarinski**.

April 2, 2025
Plovdiv

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

/ Assoc. Prof. PhD Krasimir Alexandrov/



THE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS - VARNA

CERTIFIED QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ISO 9001:2015

8000 T. Varna • 11 K. Stefan Banaški Blvd • Tel: 052 843 500 • Fax: 052 843 505 • www.uoe-varna.bg

SCIENTIFIC STATEMENT

for

the establishment of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in Tourism, under a procedure announced by the University of Economics – Varna

1. General information

- Reviewer: **assoc. prof. Dr. Ivan Petrov Kilimperov**, Department of Tourism, Agricultural University - Plovdiv, PhD 3.9 Tourism
- Reason for writing the review: appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury, according to the Rector's order for appointment of the Scientific Jury No. RD 06-23/28.01.2025, assigned to prepare a scientific statement at the first meeting of the Scientific Jury held on 10.02.2025
- Author of the dissertation: **Tihomir Vasilev Patarinsky**
- dissertation topic: *"Sustainable development of Varna municipality as a tourist destination"*

1. General presentation of the dissertation (according to the requirements of Article 27, paragraph 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria)

The submitted dissertation on "Sustainable Development of Varna Municipality as a Tourist Destination" is in a form and volume meeting the requirements of the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism. The dissertation has a total volume of 258 pages, of which 215 pages of main text, 8 pages - lists of abbreviations, tables figures and appendices, 9 pages bibliographic reference and 26 - appendices.

The main text is structured into an introduction (8 pages), four chapters (Chapter I - 52 pages, Chapter II - 35 pages, Chapter III - 88 pages, Chapter IV - 29 pages) and a conclusion (3 pages).

Structurally, it includes a table of contents, a list of tables, figures and appendices, a list of abbreviations, an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, appendices and a list of references used. The bibliographical reference includes a total of 166 sources in Bulgarian, Russian, English and German, which shows the doctoral student's good language skills and knowledge of the Bulgarian and foreign literature on the problem under study.

The chosen topic is significant and topical, the set research tasks are well formulated and correspond to the main objective of the research. The main thesis of the dissertation is in line with its main objective and its proof is based on the adequately formulated three working hypotheses. The methodological apparatus of the study is well chosen.

I believe that the dissertation submitted by PhD student Tihomir Patarinsky fully meets the regulatory requirements for the development of a dissertation for the degree of PhD. The dissertation is accompanied by the required: abstract in Bulgarian and English, declaration of originality and CV of the candidate.

2. Publications and participation in scientific forums

PhD student Patarinsky presents a list of 3 publications, including 2 scientific articles and 1 report. All publications are independent. The presented publications are fully related to the dissertation topic, presenting to a large extent essential parts of the dissertation and giving it publicity.

The volume and nature of the publications submitted by PhD student Patarinsky comply with the terms and conditions for obtaining the PhD degree. According to the attached reference



for compliance with the MRRs under the PPPASRB, the PhD student meets the required number of points for the award of the PhD.

3. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation (compliance with the requirements of Article 56 of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna), opinion on the correctness of the abstract and the lexical and stylistic characteristics of the dissertation.

The study focuses on the nature and characteristics of sustainable development and the opportunities for sustainable development of Varna Municipality as a tourist destination.

The subject and object of the research are clearly formulated and logically linked to the topic of the dissertation. The main objective of the research is clearly formulated, for the achievement of which 5 research tasks are defined. Thus, the research tasks proposed by the doctoral candidate fully correspond to the main objective of the dissertation, and are a prerequisite for its achievement. The proposed research thesis specifies the main directions of the research, and the proposed working hypotheses are the basis for the derivation of the key characteristics and opportunities of Varna municipality for development as a sustainable tourist destination.

The dissertation is well structured and balanced. In the first chapter, a comprehensive theoretical study of sustainable tourism development is conducted and the main prerequisites for sustainable tourism development of destinations are discussed. The content and key characteristics of sustainable tourism are well presented.

In the second chapter of the dissertation the methodological apparatus of the research is presented and an author's system of indicators for sustainable tourism development of a destination at the level of a municipality is presented. The analysis and research of the sustainable tourism development of Varna municipality are presented in the third chapter of the dissertation. For this purpose, field research and surveys were conducted with representatives of the tourism sector (Appendix 4), as well as with tourists and local residents (Appendix 5). On this basis, adequate conclusions have been formulated and applied in the system of indicators created by the author. Based on these, the author correctly rejects the first working hypothesis and accepts the other two.

Chapter 4 presents the key opportunities for the development of Varna as a sustainable tourist destination. Emphasis is placed on the adequate use of the collected market information, protection and conservation of tourist resources, improvement of transport accessibility, maintenance of available facilities, experienced and intelligent tourist industry and highly qualified staff, positive image, optimization of tourist flows, etc.

The structure and content of the dissertation fully correspond to the topic, main aim and research objectives. The individual elements of the dissertation are well logically linked, precise and understandable scientific language is used.

The presented dissertation shows that PhD student Patarinsky possesses the necessary theoretical knowledge, can conduct independent research and summarize the results obtained from them. The abstract reflects fully and accurately the dissertation submitted for review.

4. Identification and evaluation of the scientific and applied contributions in the dissertation

In the submitted reference for the contributions of the dissertation work, a total of 5 contributions are indicated - 3 scientific-theoretical and 2 practical-applied. After the analysis of the dissertation, I confirm the proposed contributions, in accordance with Art. 3 of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS - VARNA

CERTIFIED QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ISO 9001:2015

2002 Varna • 77 Ampaz Boris I Blvd • Telephone 052 643 360 • Fax: 052 37 643 362 • www.uo-economia.bg

5. Plagiarism found or not found in the thesis, publications and abstract. Established or not established use of incorrect data or incorrect reference to other scientific works

No plagiarism was found in the dissertation submitted for scientific statement, as well as in the related abstract and publications.

6. Critical comments and recommendations

I would recommend PhD student Tihomir Patarinsky to be more active in terms of his publication activities. In the future, I would recommend the PhD student to think in the direction of exploring the possibilities of building on the concept of sustainable tourism development with the implementation of various regenerative practices.

7. Conclusion

The dissertation proposed by PhD student Tihomir Patarinsky is an original and in-depth study, bringing its scientific-theoretical and practical-applied contributions to sustainable tourism development.

All of the above, as well as the findings made in accordance with the requirements for the preparation of the scientific statement, justify me in giving **fully positive evaluation and to propose to the distinguished members of the Scientific Jury to award PhD student Tihomir Vasilev Patarinsky the PhD degree in professional field 3.9 Tourism, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)."**

04.04.2025
Plovdiv

Reviewer:
/assoc. prof. Dr. Ivan Kilimperov/

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



To the Chairman of the Scientific Jury

Prof. Stoyan Marinov, PhD

ATTITUDE

from Prof. Viliyan Krastev, DSc

about:

Dissertation work for the acquisition of the PhD - "Sustainable development of the municipality of Varna as a tourist destination" by T. Patarinski

1. Data about the candidate

Tihomir Vassilev Patarinski graduated with a degree in Tourism ("Bachelor's" and "Master's") from the University of Varna and a full-time doctoral degree in the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism of the University of Varna. He has extensive experience in tourism management (Varna Municipal Administration, Varna Tourist Chamber), and since March 2022 he has held the position of Tourism Attaché at the Embassy of Bulgaria in Berlin, Germany.

2. Data about the dissertation and abstract

The dissertation is 258 pages long. It contains an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references. The main text contains 12 tables and 62 figures. 131 sources are cited. 7 appendices have been prepared in addition to the work. The work is distinguished by its completeness, thoroughness, consistency in the structuring of the individual parts, and very good bibliographical awareness of the author.

The abstract is 38 pages long and fully reflects the content of the dissertation work. Two articles and one report have been declared on the topic of the dissertation research, published in scientific publications of the University of Varna and the Union of Scientists, Varna branch.

3. Content of the dissertation

The topic of the work concerns the problem of sustainable development of the destination using the example of the municipality of Varna. The conceptual content of sustainable development is presented in great depth in this regard, with reference to sustainable tourism. The chronology, leading authors, and trends in the ideological evolution of this scientific and social movement are known in detail. An original methodology and model for assessing sustainable tourism development at the municipal level has been developed, both in terms of consumers and tourism entities. In a constructive plan, adequate guidelines have been proposed for optimizing and managing the sustainable tourism development of the municipality.

The presentation of the work very well reveals the potential and problems of regional tourism development.

From the point of view of the analysis made in the dissertation study and the conclusions formulated, the work has high practical value. The in-depth nature of the study of the local environment and the regularities deduced from the analysis give me reason to recommend it to the experts from the specialized Tourism Directorate of the Varna Municipal Administration. To optimize the municipal plan in the field of tourism, it would be a valuable reference point in the implementation of rational and sustainable policies that are consistent with the local tourism profile.

4. Notes on the dissertation

Like any scientific work, this one is not without its shortcomings. The inaccuracies I have noticed in the text, however, are of a synthetic and conceptual nature, and do not diminish its value.

In the empirical part of the work, it would be much more rational to rank tourism resources by functional significance for tourism in the municipality. This would highlight their importance for territorial organization and the prospects for tourism sustainability.

Some of the tables (No. 9) and figures (No. 14, 15, 17), dedicated to processing data for the municipality with an indirect relation to the subject of the study, could be included as appendices.

Given the synthetic nature of the SWOT analysis method, a reduction of its content in the presented matrix is necessary.

The Asia-Pacific tourist region written in the text is actually Asia and Oceania (in Bulgarian).

Based on the theoretical aspects presented in the study, I allow myself to ask the following question:

Because from the perspective of consumer behavior, much of the world lives in an unsustainable environment, subject to mass production, mass transportation, mass automobile manufacturing, mass culture, tastes for mass consumption, etc., what is the situation with the increasing standardized mass tourism offering, which is leveling tourist tastes, and the sustainability of tourism (social, seasonal, ecological, economic)? Isn't this the main reason blocking its realization and, respectively, strengthening its utopianism?

5. Conclusion

The presented dissertation represents an original authorial research with in-depth knowledge of the issues at hand. The regulations for the defense procedure have been complied with. No plagiarism has been identified. This gives me reason to evaluate it with a positive vote – “Yes” awarding the “PhD” in the field of Tourism 3.9 to PhD student Tihomir Patarinski.

Varna, 19.03.25.

Signature:

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

Assoc. Prof. V. Krastev, DSc