

EVALUATION SRAREMENT

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3.8 "Economics", *Scientific specialty "Statistics, Econometrics and Demography"*

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Title of the dissertation: " Statistical study of tourism in Bulgaria"
Dissertation for Educational & Scientific Degree /ESD/ "Doctor", Professional
field 3.8 "Economics", Scientific specialty "Statistics and Demography".

1. General overview of the dissertation.

The submitted dissertation has a total volume of 204 pages, of which 162 pages of main text. It consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of 154 references (of which 90 specialized sources in Bulgarian) and appendices. The work contains 13 tables and 32 figures, and a declaration of originality of the content of the dissertation is also included.

The object of the dissertation work are the visits of foreign tourists to the Republic of Bulgaria, and the subject, respectively, is focused on the state and trends in the dynamics and structure of the visits of foreign tourists. The time scope of the study is limited to the period from 2008 to 2024. The defined subject and object of the dissertation work directly correspond to its main goal, namely to carry out a statistical study of the state, dynamics, seasonality and structural changes of the incoming tourist flow in Bulgaria for the specified period. The main methodology of the study covers statistical methods for analyzing dynamics and forecasting, as well as methods for analyzing structures and structural changes.

To achieve the goal, five research tasks have been formulated and the necessary evidence for their execution is found in the exposition. According to the main research thesis, through the application of appropriate statistical and econometric methods for studying the dynamics, seasonality, and structural changes in the indicators for the inbound tourist flow, objective patterns can be revealed, which allows to correctly model the trend and to generate short-term forecasts for assessing the future dynamics of key indicators of inbound tourism.

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

2.1. Assessment of the relevance and development of research in the dissertation scientific topic.

Undoubtedly, the relevance of the researched issue stems from the sustainable role of international tourism in the Bulgarian economy, in particular the visits of

foreign citizens for the purpose of leisure, recreation and tourism in Bulgaria. An important point here is the search for useful information of analytical nature, which would support the justification and making of management decisions regarding the regulation and stimulation of the development of tourism industry in Bulgaria. I believe that the chosen topic has the potential to provide such useful information for a key sector such as international tourism, given the appropriate research approach. The dissertation work shows that the doctoral student is well informed about the statistical information provision of the analysis of tourism industry and the main aspects of the application of international standards and methodological guidelines in the field of tourism statistics, provided by the UN and Eurostat. A significant range of relevant Bulgarian and foreign specialized literary sources have been studied.

2.2. Opinion on the language, volume, and tools of the dissertation.

The overall impression of the work is very good, a clear style of presentation, correct terminology, and adequate conceptual apparatus are used. The volume of the dissertation corresponds to the usual requirements for such a scientific work. The proposed toolkit provides the opportunity to evaluate seasonal dynamics models (including TRAMO/SEATS, X13 ARIMA-SEATS) and derive extrapolation forecasts for a set of selected indicators. The content of the dissertation undoubtedly provides evidence for the acquired knowledge and skills by the doctoral student to conduct independent scientific and applied research and obtain useful analytical results.

2.3. Opinion on the abstract and publications for the dissertation.

The submitted abstract is of optimal volume and structure, reflecting the main aspects of the work to the necessary extent, as well as the results obtained in it. Four scientific publications are attached to the dissertation, of which two independently authored articles in a specialized scientific publication and two conference papers (co-authored with the scientific supervisor), published in proceedings of prestigious scientific forums. These publications significantly present the achievements of the work, covering the minimum scientometric requirements for a dissertation work in scientific area 3 "Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences". No indications of irregular use of literature and information sources are found.

3. Scientific and applied contributions in the dissertation.

I would like to highlight the following main scientific and applied contributions achieved in the dissertation:

- through a systematic analysis of the processes of institutional regulation of tourism statistics in Bulgaria, an assessment has been made of the harmonization of the national statistical practice concerning the tourism sector with the current international standards for tourism industry statistics;
- after selecting specific indicators for statistical analysis of the dynamics and seasonality in the incoming tourist flow, as well as adopting appropriate

statistical methodology and conducting own empirical research, specific patterns have been identified, on the basis of which interval forecasts with a medium-term horizon are derived;

- through an analysis of the structure and structural changes in the composition of the tourist inflow, new knowledge has been obtained regarding some existing patterns in the differentiation of the flow by main groups of countries of origin and by motives for visits.

4. Notes and questions on the dissertation

I would ask the doctoral candidate the following questions.

- In order to study the trend in the dynamics of the indicator “Visits of citizens from other European countries for leisure and excursion purposes” a quadratic model was estimated, in which an interesting component was added: $-1154790 \cdot D2020$. Similar components are also found in the other estimated trend models. What is the nature of the added variable (D2020) and how can the obtained estimate of its parameter be interpreted?

- By the opinion of the candidate, are there any variables that are missing from the scope of information provision of the analysis of tourism industry, however, such would provide additional results with high utility for the analysis of the development of this industry? Can she give examples of such?

I would recommend that the doctoral candidate deepens her research in the field of the tourism industry, including the issues of causal analysis and the key factors of demand for various tourism products in different market segments, by both foreign and Bulgarian consumers.

5. Summary evaluation of the dissertation work and conclusion

Based on the above assessment of the submitted dissertation, I assume that the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Law (ASDL, Art. 6), the Regulations for the Application of ASDL, and the Regulations for the Application of ASDL at "D. A. Tsenov " Academy of Economics – Svishtov regarding the award of the ESD "Doctor" **have been met**. I give a **positive assessment** of the dissertation, and I propose to the Scientific Jury to award **Plamena Yordanova Koleva** the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the Professional field 3.8 "Economics", Scientific specialty "Statistics and Demography".

14.03.2025
Sofia

Signature:
/ Prof. Dr. Venelin Boshnakov /