



## OPPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Paskal Nedelchev Zhelev, UNWE-Sofia, scientific specialty "World Economy and International Economic Relations"

on the dissertation: „3 On some changes in the theory and practice of regional economic integration “ for the degree of Doctor of Science in the professional field 3.8 "Economics", scientific specialty "World Economy and International Economic Relations", with candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Eduard Vasilev Marinov

### 1. Significance of the research problem in scientific and applied terms.

In a rapidly changing global environment, in which the interactions between countries and their regional groupings are becoming increasingly complex, the study of the mechanisms of regional economic integration is of particular importance. The rise of regional trade agreements, the challenges posed by rising protectionism, and trends towards de-globalization highlight the importance of regional integration as a key factor for economic development and sustainability.

Scientifically, the dissertation not only adds to the existing literature on the topic, but also challenges traditional theories of economic integration, highlighting the need for new approaches. The author proposes innovative solutions that reflect contemporary realities by introducing a three-dimensional assessment of integration processes and a new typology of integration agreements. These innovations enable a better understanding of the dynamics of integration initiatives and their impact on changes in the global economy. The research has considerable potential for practical application. By identifying the main mechanisms of integration and analyzing their impact, the work offers practical guidance that can help countries adapt their economic strategies and promote sustainable development in the context of global economic transformations.

### 2. Justification of the aims and objectives of the thesis.

The aims and objectives of the dissertation of Assoc. Marinov are formulated with the necessary clarity and logic, which underlines his thorough understanding of the research topic. The author has successfully identified the key aspects of regional economic integration that need to be addressed in order to achieve a thorough scientific study and practically applicable analysis.

The main objective of the dissertation is to explore the dynamics of regional economic integration and to propose new conceptual frameworks for assessing integration processes. This objective is well founded given the relevance of the topic in the context of the ongoing transformational changes in the world economy. The author demonstrates that traditional theories of integration do not always succeed in explaining contemporary realities, and that it is therefore necessary to develop new approaches adapted to the specificities of small and developing economies.

The tasks formulated in the paper are not only adequate to the main objective of the study, but also provide a structured approach to the analysis of regional economic integration. They include an examination of structural changes in world trade, a critical review of the existing literature, an analysis of empirical data and case studies to assess the practical implications of regional integration, and the development of a new conceptual framework for the assessment of integration processes. All of these elements are essential for achieving significant scholarly and practical contributions, providing the depth and breadth of analysis needed to reveal the complexity of integration processes.

### 3. Relevance between the chosen research methodology and methodology and the stated aim and objectives of the dissertation.

The chosen methodology and research methodology in the dissertation of Assoc. Marinov are perfectly consistent with the formulated aims and objectives. A multidisciplinary approach is used, which is mainly based on economic concepts, but also integrates methods from political science and international



relations. This interdisciplinary perspective enriches the analysis and provides a comprehensive coverage of the complex dynamics of regional integration processes. The author applies a mixed methodology combining qualitative and quantitative methods, which provides a multilayered understanding of regional economic integration phenomena. Through quantitative analyses of trade flows, combined with a critical review of existing literature and case studies, Assoc. Marinov manages to identify key factors and trends that influence integration processes. The study provides an in-depth and comprehensive examination of the challenges and opportunities associated with regional economic integration, and thus provides valuable guidance for policies and strategies applicable in the context of the contemporary global economic architecture.

4. Scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation (description and evaluation), including the presence of original contributions to science.

The dissertation of Assoc. Marinov provides significant scientific and applied contributions in the field of regional economic integration. The main contribution is the development of a new conceptual framework for the classification of trade and economic agreements and for the analysis and evaluation of integration processes, tailored to the degree of development of the countries involved. This new theoretical framework not only reflects the complexity of integration processes, but also offers a structured basis for data analysis and interpretation that is an original addition to the academic literature.

The author is able to identify key factors and trends affecting integration processes through quantitative analyses of trade flows and a critical review of the existing literature. These research findings are essential for understanding the mechanisms of integration and provide valuable information not only for the research community but also for economic and policy decision makers.

The inclusion of case studies that demonstrate practical examples of the effects of economic integration processes contributes to enriching the scholarly literature with real-world applications.

The dissertation also offers reference points that can be useful for policymakers in emerging economies seeking to address the challenges of fitting into the global economy. These are based on an in-depth analysis of integration processes and provide practical solutions and guidance to improve integration initiatives.

In addition, the study broadens the theoretical base in the field of regional economic integration by offering critiques and new ideas to existing theories. The author stresses the need to adapt theoretical frameworks to contemporary realities, which is essential for the development of the scientific field.

5. Assessment of publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they have been published.

The dissertation of Assoc. Marinov's dissertation is supported by an impressive number of publications that reflect his long-standing research interest in the topic of regional economic integration. The total number of published works related to the dissertation is thirteen, covering various aspects of trade policies, integration and economic change in a global context.

The publications have appeared in prestigious academic journals such as *Economic Thought* and the *Journal of Financial and Monetary Economics*, as well as in publishers such as Palgrave Macmillan. These publications are of high scholarly value and contribute to the legitimacy of the research, providing a platform for the dissemination of the author's new ideas and achievements.

The publications include both qualitative and quantitative studies that examine various aspects of integration, including the impact of regional integration on trade flows and economic development. The author's works, which analyze real-world case studies, provide practical examples of the effects of integration processes, complementing theoretical conclusions with real-world applications.

6. Citations from other authors, reviews in the scientific press, etc.

The dissertation of Assoc. Marinov has received considerable attention in the scientific community,



which is reflected in a number of citations in various scientific articles and studies related to the topic of regional economic integration, economic policies and trade relations. The citation of his works in reputable scientific journals testifies to the validity and relevance of the conclusions he proposes.

7. Opinions, recommendations and comments.

The dissertation of Assoc. Eduard Marinov represents a significant study in the field of regional economic integration and provides an important contribution to both the scientific literature and the practical application of national strategies for participation in integration processes. In spite of the high level of the work, I would allow myself some recommendations that do not alter the achievements of the dissertation.

First, I would suggest that the author continue to develop the conceptual framework he has put forward in the dissertation. It demonstrates originality and is suitable for application in empirical research. Broadening the theoretical foundation and incorporating concrete data and real-world examples would contribute to a more complete understanding of the dynamics of integration. Second, I recommend that Assoc. Marinov to pay attention to integrating the views of practitioners in the field of economic integration. Conducting interviews with experts and representatives of governmental and nongovernmental organizations could provide additional value and confirm the practical applicability of the study's findings. Next, I would recommend that the author specify the specific methodological approaches used to select the case studies he analyzes. This will help the reader to better understand the choice of specific examples and how they illustrate broader trends in integration processes.

Finally, I would recommend Assoc. Marinov to continue publishing articles based on the new theoretical framework proposed in the thesis in international academic journals. This would increase the visibility of his research in the global scholarly arena and contribute to broadening the impact of his work, as the topic has relevance beyond the local context and is of particular importance for understanding contemporary economic interactions and integration processes.

8. Conclusion with a clearly formulated positive or negative evaluation of the thesis. The scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation are significant, offering new perspectives and contributions that enrich the existing literature. The author develops a new conceptual framework for analyzing the multilayered nature of contemporary regional economic integration that is original and adapted to current challenges in the current global economy.

The overall content, conclusions and scientific contributions contained in the research, give me the reason to give a positive assessment of the dissertation on "On Some Changes in the Theory and Practice of Regional Economic Integration" and to recommend the members of the esteemed scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Eduard Vasilev Marinov in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, doctoral programme "World Economy. International Economic Relations".

Date 14.10.2024.

Signature: