

Opinion

From Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetelina Ivanova Marinova , Department of Economics, Master's Faculty, NBU.

Reason for submitting the opinion: Participation in the scientific jury of the competition for the award of PhD degree, according to the Order No. 3-RK-56/31.10.2024 of the Rector of New Bulgarian University.

The opinion is developed in compliance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff of the NBU, the Regulation for its Implementation and the Regulation on the Development of Academic Staff of the NBU.

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

The subject of the dissertation of PhD student Mina Karpuzova, related to the development of business models in the field of circular economy in the European Union (EU) is particularly topical and has gained wide popularity in recent years in Europe and the world. The research focuses on business practices in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, the development of the circular economy and in particular the practices of companies in this area are understudied and there is still little research on that. At the same time, the development of the sector in Europe is accelerating. In the EU, the circular economy has become part of the political agenda, where issues of sustainable development and growth have come to the fore in the context of the constant crises, the coronavirus pandemic, natural disasters, conflicts and wars that countries have been facing.

The circular economy aims to transforming the economy towards the efficient and rational use of natural and productive resources and overcoming the enormous losses and negative effects of their misuse and mismanagement on nature and human health and life. In this regard, the circular economy is an integral part of modern economic science and its evolution, and is attracting increasing scientific interest and attention in Europe and worldwide.

The first ideas about the circular economy have been linked to the emergence and development of the concepts of "*industrial ecology*" and "*industrial symbiosis*" used in economic geography in the 1940s. Later, they became more prominent in the 1960s and 1970s in the context of the emergence of the environmental movement in the USA and Europe, and from the early 1980s, the ideas of a smooth transition to a sustainable society emerged.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the sustainable development goals set by global organisations have found support, but at the same time the measures and policies to achieve them have remained controversial and ambiguous. Sustainable development and economic growth have not only been the subject of debate but have also given rise to new economic ideas such as 'degrowth'. In this sense, the circular economy could play an important role in the search for effective solutions to the economic, social and environmental challenges facing humanity.

2. Justification of the aims and objectives of the thesis

The aims and objectives of the dissertation are clearly and logically formulated and are in full accordance with the chosen topic. They are not only scientific, but also scientific and practical in nature and this makes the research more extensive and valuable for the representatives of the academic community, as well as for politicians, managers, experts and the whole society.

The doctoral candidate has also defined a hypothesis, the scope and the limitations of the dissertation that are consistent with its purpose and facilitate the reader in following the content and connections between the different parts of the work.

3. Correspondence between the chosen methodology and research methodology and the set aim and objectives of the dissertation

The introduction of the dissertation correctly presents the research methods used by the PhD candidate. The choice of different qualitative and quantitative methods makes the work thorough and complete. They are skillfully combined with the use of numerous scientific articles and monographs, statistical, legislative and strategic documents, acts, analyses, which testify to the PhD student's knowledge of the ideas, policies, trends and practices of the circular economy in Europe and especially in Bulgaria.

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

The dissertation includes both scientific and applied contributions.

I would highlight the following scientific contributions:

- A vast amount of information related to the concepts, legislation, institutionalization and practices of the circular economy in Europe and Bulgaria has been systematized and summarized. On this basis, difficulties and constraints facing the sector are identified and recommendations for overcoming them have been made;
- The in depth analysis of alternative business models in Bulgaria based on interviews in leading companies, as well as the survey made of the consumers of their products.

I would like to point out the following applied contributions:

- Based on the analysis of alternative business models in Bulgaria, conclusions are drawn on the economic efficiency of the companies studied;
- Recommendations are made on promoting the circular model in Bulgaria and its role in achieving environmental and social goals. One of these recommendations is the development of a single digital platform for sharing best practices in the circular economy.

5. Assessment of the dissertation publications: number, nature of publications, in which they are published.

In the abstract, the PhD student has presented three publications related to the thesis. It is evident from Mina Karpuzova's dissertation and fulfillment of criteria report that she has also other articles. She has published in the *Economic Thought journal* of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, as well as in the proceedings of national and international

conferences and yearbooks of New Bulgarian University, International Higher Business School, etc.

6. Opinions, recommendations and comments.

Mina Karpuzova's dissertation represents a topical and in-depth scientific and applied research in the field of circular economy. The PhD student demonstrates excellent knowledge of the concepts, policies and practices in the researched area in the EU and Bulgaria and she has excellent skills to present, analyze and discuss the trends, constraints and problems related to the development of alternative business models in Bulgaria. She participates in national and international initiatives and projects in the field of circular economy and sustainable development, and also teaches courses bachelor and master programs in the NBU.

My personal impressions of PhD student Mina Karpuzova are excellent. She is a highly motivated, responsible, consistent and creative young colleague and scholar who has initiated and implemented a variety of academic activities in the department and the university in recent years.

My recommendations to the PhD student are as follows:

- To continue to broaden and deepen its theoretical and practical knowledge and experience in the field of circular economy and sustainable development;
- To develop more critical thinking in relation to ideas, concepts, policies and issues of circular economy and sustainable development in national and European context;
- To increase its publication activity in national and international journals and publications.

In the framework of the dissertation defense, I would like the PhD student to share her future research ideas and plans.

7. Conclusion with a clearly formulated positive or negative evaluation of the dissertation.

The foregoing gives me reason to highly evaluate the dissertation. I believe that the doctoral candidate possesses all the necessary qualities and fully meets the requirements for obtaining the scientific degree "Doctor".

In conclusion, I propose to the distinguished scientific jury to support the award of the scientific degree "Doctor" to Mina Lyubomirova Karpuzova in the professional field 3.8 "Economics" and scientific specialty "World Economy and International Economic Relations" of the New Bulgarian University.

Date: 11.12.2024

JURY MEMBER:

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetelina Marinova)