

STATEMENT

of Assoc. Prof. Maria Manolova-Voykova, NAIM-BAS / RHM-Varna

for submitted dissertation

"Strategy for the management of the cultural and natural heritage of the municipality of Pavlikeni".

The dissertation of Diana Miteva, submitted for defence, includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and a bibliographical reference, with a total length of 255 pages, including the illustrations. The bibliography lists 88 scientific works, almost all Bulgarian. More than 50 Internet sources, 40 personal interviews, a large number of administrative documents and regulations are used.

The dissertation focuses on a topical, socially significant problem for the municipality of Pavlikeni, the overall development of which is able to offer new perspectives for the conservation and management of cultural and natural heritage in the region and its transformation into a real mechanism for attracting tourist flow and the resulting economic growth. Working on this complex issue requires a thorough and impartial analysis of the potential that the municipality of Pavlikeni has, both in the natural resources and cultural monuments themselves and in the existing administrative capacity and facilities. These should be the main tasks of the work, which will lead to the fulfilment of the main objective - synthesising a programme for modernising and optimising the management of cultural, historical and natural heritage. In view of this, I believe that there is ambiguity in the introductory part about the aims and objectives of the study. The stated objectives of the paper are in fact the assessment of the state of the museum network, the existing administrative structure and the potential for their development.

The first chapter, which is also the most voluminous, is entitled "Museums and Public Collections." It deals with two museums and nine museum collections. Diana Miteva's diligence in gathering a large body of information on the creation and development of the collections is evident. The expositions are described and illustrated. The description of each museum collection is followed by a commentary on its current state and the author's views on the prospects for its development. This should be the main focus of the analysis of museum collections and should be based not only on personal impressions but also on official, administratively supported

information that gives a real insight into the development of the institution concerned. In fact, for each museum, it is data such as the number of collection units, the dynamics of the units, the number of visitors and target audiences, the number of events and exhibitions organised that are the main indicators that characterise the museum institution and determine its status. The lack of such information negatively affects the objectivity of the analysis and reduces it to an unprofessional description of the currently observed state of the museum or museum collection. I would like to point out that the author's remark at the beginning of the chapter about the confidentiality of such information does not correspond to the truth, as it could have been requested from the museum or the Ministry of Culture or the National Statistical Institute. Due to the above mentioned weaknesses, I believe that the study of museum collections in the first chapter remains fragmentary and in its evaluative part expresses mainly the subjective view of the author.

In the second chapter "Historical, natural and intangible cultural heritage" are presented monuments with potential for socialization, including little-known archaeological sites, historical places, natural areas, temples, traditional customs and practices. I believe that the information found and summarized in this part is one of the main contributions of the work, as it outlines the enormous potential of the municipality of Pavlikeni for the development of cultural tourism by linking in a common thematic network of sites of different nature in geographical proximity.

The last chapter, chapter three, sets out the author's views on the main perspectives for the future development of the cultural and natural heritage of Pavlikeni. The author sees solutions for the safe preservation and conservation of cultural heritage in the digitalization and introduction of new technologies in the museum space. Here it is relevant to note that such processes are preceded by the provision of appropriate material facilities and qualified staff - problems that the author should also take part in solving. The development of museum institutions is linked to innovative methods of working with the public, to the promotion of cultural heritage and museum institutions through an active presence in the media space - practices that are already producing good results in a number of Bulgarian museums. I fully support the idea of building a unified system uniting museums, public collections, historical and natural sites in the Municipality of Pavlikeni, which would enable the development of meaningful tourist products.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the presented dissertation is the first attempt to systematize and study the cultural and natural heritage of Pavlikeni municipality. In spite of the already mentioned weaknesses, the detailed view of the

author on the cultural heritage of the region and her motivation to find workable solutions for the preservation and promotion of the cultural and natural attractions of Pavlikeni are clearly visible in the work.

The proposed text fully meets the educational criterion for a doctoral dissertation. In scientific terms there is still much to be added, but given the specificity of the topic, which requires serious practical knowledge and experience in the field of museum and cultural heritage management, I recommend the scientific jury to award Diana Miteva PhD degree.

Varna, April 2024 Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maria Manolova-Voykova

