

STATEMENT

From: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobrin Zhekov Dobrev

University of Economics - Varna

Subject: Dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.7 Administration and Management at MU - Varna.

Author of the dissertation: Elena Petrova Todorova

Topic of the dissertation: "Access to Dental Care in Bulgaria"

Basis for presenting the statement: participation in the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation according to Order P-109-478/16.11.2023 of the Rector of MU

1. Information about the doctoral candidate

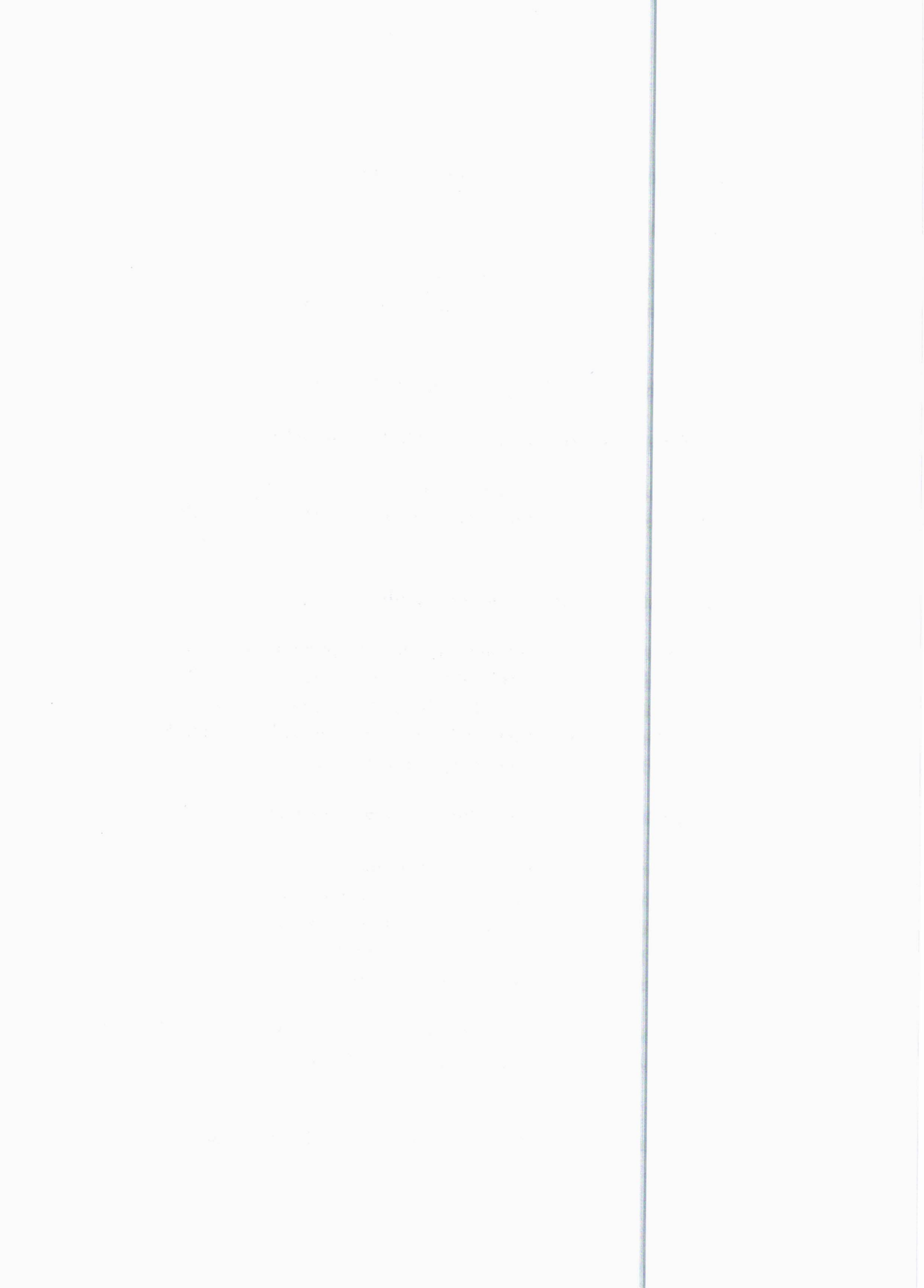
The doctoral candidate was trained in a doctoral program at the Department of "Economics and Management of Healthcare" of the Faculty of "Public Health" at MU - Varna in the scientific specialty "Organization and Management outside the Sphere of Material Production (in Health care)" according to the Rector's Order P-109-390/09.10.2020. The training was conducted in regular form.

2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

Elena Todorova's dissertation investigates the level and factors determining access to dental care in the country. The total volume is 138 pages. The material proposed for review includes an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. They contain 27 tables and 7 figures. The literary review covers 211 sources, including 25 in Bulgarian and 186 in English. There are 3 appendices.

The structure of the work is logically sound. It is subordinated to the main research thesis and is aimed at achieving the goal through the completion of the set tasks.

The literature review shows the use of sources in Bulgarian and English.



The volume of the dissertation is optimal. The second chapter is prioritized. The illustrative material is sufficient. The work is based on empirical material, and regulatory framework of the past years.

The chosen topic of the dissertation research stands out with a specific focus. It is oriented towards the study related to a fundamental component of human health. Oral diseases require a different approach concerning awareness, access, treatment and funding. The impact on quality of life, prevention, health culture, patient requirements, etc., creates a reality that presents a significant challenge to healthcare systems and management.

In the topic, the author links needs, health care, barriers, awareness, communication, and outcomes.

The introduction contains general statements and the **relevance of the research**. **The conceptual framework** is presented through relevance, defined **goals and objectives** of the research; **main research hypothesis**, methods, and limitations of the study. At this stage, the clarity and argumentation of the concepts and ideas advocated by the author become apparent. The essence of the development can be easily discerned, namely - analysis and evaluation of accessibility, awareness, acceptability, and usability of dental services.

3. Evaluation of obtained scientific and scientific-practical results

The development of technologies, treatment methods, and patient requirements presents new opportunities for achieving more effective health awareness and dental services.

In the First chapter, concepts regarding health and dental services are examined. The positions of leading specialists regarding access to healthcare, as well as some established models, are traced. The main dimensions are indicated - accessibility; acceptability; availability; financial accessibility; appropriateness. Of interest is also the assessment of the need for dental services. Subsequently, classifications of barriers to access to dental practises are analyzed. Three main groups are identified - structural, financial, and personal. Some generalizations regarding achieved health outcomes in Europe and the country have been made.

The Second chapter is focused on the study of access to dental care. A correct survey of a representative number of respondents - users and providers of dental services has been conducted. The structural barriers to access have been analyzed. The availability of dentists, medical personnel, and dental technicians has been examined. Imbalances in planning regions regarding the positioning of

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for consistent data collection procedures and the use of appropriate statistical techniques to interpret the results.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the role of data in decision-making. It explains how data-driven insights can help identify trends, assess risks, and optimize resource allocation.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the challenges associated with data management, such as data quality, security, and privacy. It provides strategies to address these challenges and ensure the integrity of the data.

5. The fifth part of the document explores the future of data analytics, including the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning. It discusses how these technologies can enhance data analysis capabilities and provide more predictive insights.

6. The sixth part of the document concludes by summarizing the key points and emphasizing the ongoing nature of data analysis. It encourages a continuous learning and improvement mindset in the field.

7. The seventh part of the document provides a list of references and resources for further reading. It includes books, articles, and online courses that offer in-depth knowledge on data analysis topics.

8. The eighth part of the document includes a glossary of key terms and definitions used throughout the document. This helps readers understand the terminology and concepts related to data analysis.

9. The ninth part of the document contains a list of appendices, which provide additional information and data related to the main text. These appendices are useful for readers who want to explore specific aspects of the data analysis process in more detail.

10. The tenth part of the document is a concluding statement that reiterates the importance of data analysis and the need for a data-driven approach in the modern business environment.

dental practices have been identified. The organization of work and the associated convenience, meeting the needs and requirements of patients, has been traced.

The emphasis in the development is placed on financial accessibility. The roles of the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) and the scope of the "Dental Activities" package have been established. Connections and dependencies in health, insurance, income, education, and employment status have been identified. A comparison regarding the degree of influence of payment for dental services has been made. The attitudes of patients towards dental care have been studied. Results comparing the degree of influence of fear of dental manipulations are of interest. An overall assessment of the degree of influence on established barriers - payment, time, difficult access, fear of manipulations, and the need for treatment has been made. The research part concludes with specific conclusions and generalizations.

The third chapter is practically oriented. The results of the study for dental medicine graduates, as well as the maximum availability of personnel by regions and for the country, have been analyzed. The convenience associated with the organization of practices - working days, appointments, and waiting times has been measured.

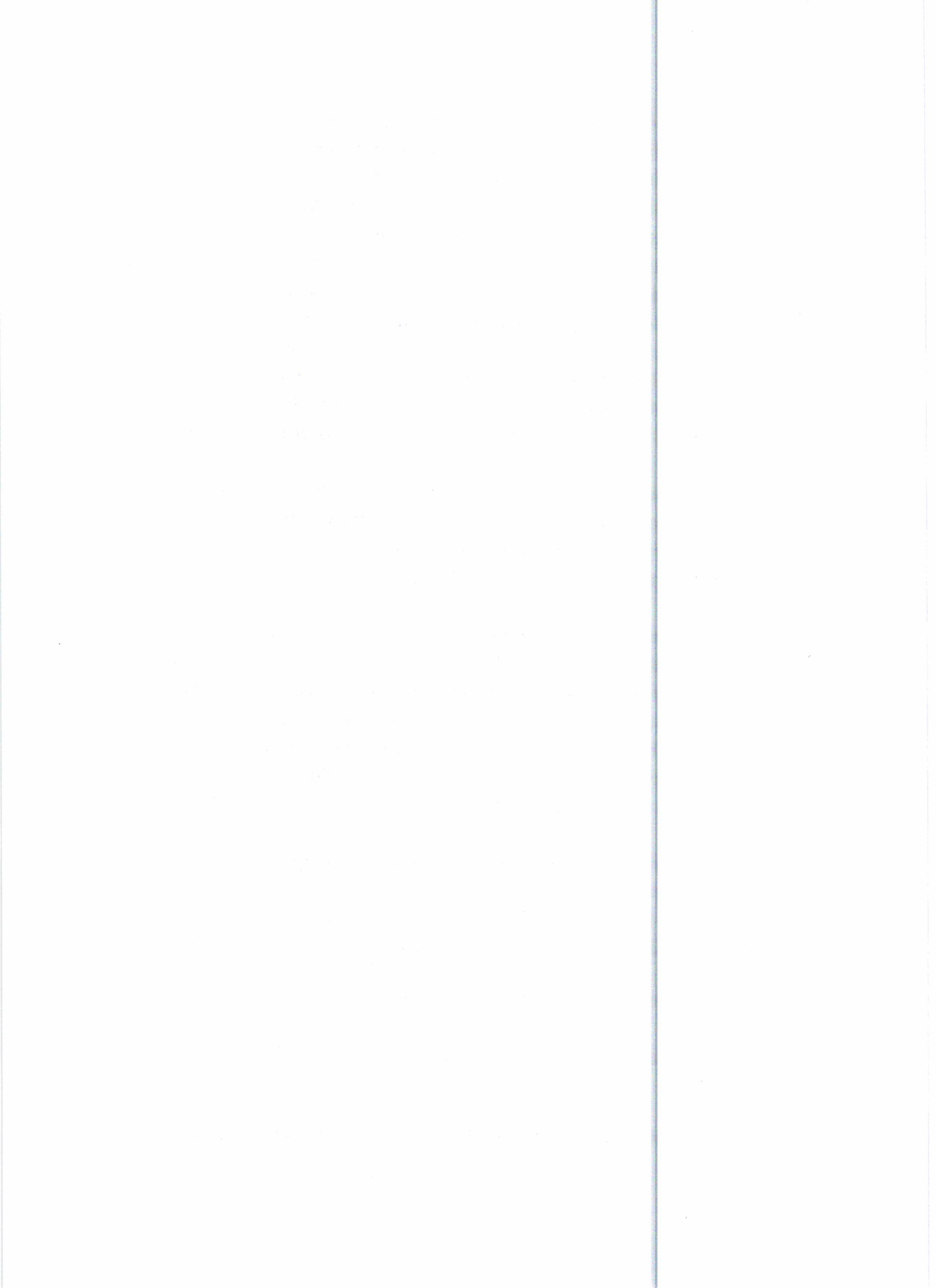
Financial barriers have been identified as fundamental for dental care. The package of dental services of the NHIF has been analyzed, comparisons with some EU countries have been made, and the predominance of patient co-payment has been established (a trend valid for European countries). The main factor for access to dental care has been identified as the socio-economic status of the patient. The results regarding awareness have been processed. Variations have been observed, and it has been generalized that patients process and understand health information.

A particular interest is the analysis of the acceptability factor. The influence of anxiety, fear, and concern has been established. Approaches to reduce their negative effects have been commented on. Conclusions have been drawn regarding the six dimensions of access to dental services.

In conclusion, recommendations for improving access to dental care have been outlined.

In the Conclusion part some of the main elements of the dissertation are reflected.

4. Evaluation of Scientific and Scientific-Practical Contributions



The dissertation as a whole has merits that provide a basis for defining its scientific and scientific-practical contributions.

1. A theoretical overview of specialized literature on barriers and access to dental care has been accomplished.
2. The influence of structured factors on the usability of dental services has been assessed.
3. A study on access to dental care has been conducted. The results have been interpreted.
4. Generalizations, conclusions, and recommendations have been made.

The reference to the contributions in the abstract is considered a realistic reflection of the achievements of the doctoral candidate, with certain reservations towards the second.

5. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation

The list of publications includes three standalone titles, all related to the dissertation's topic. The forums where they were presented contribute to the popularization of the concepts.

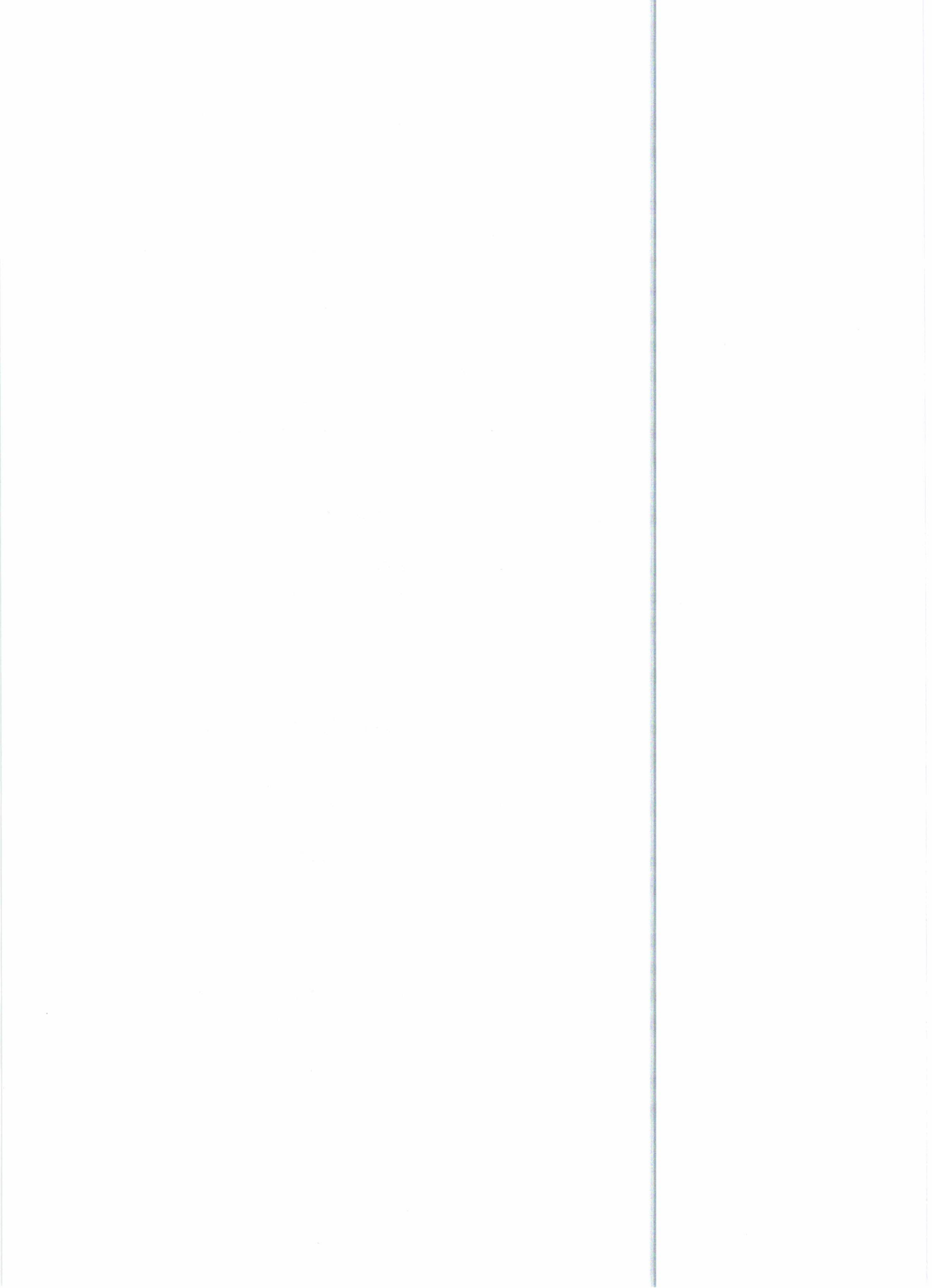
6. Evaluation of the abstract

The abstract meets the requirements and accurately reflects key points from the overall content of the dissertation.

7. Critical notes, recommendations, and questions

No significant conceptual omissions are noticed in the dissertation. Some critical notes and recommendations:

- The second chapter is prioritized. Part of the information could be systematized and presented in the appendices.
- Research developments should necessarily include Object and Subject.
- A recommendation in dissertation research is to have a defined main thesis and hypotheses.
- It would be beneficial to interpret the hypothesis stated in the Introductory part at the end of the dissertation



My question is related to the identified problems regarding financial barriers, namely – what specific measures and activities would you propose to overcome the financial barriers related to the payment for dental services?

8. Conclusion

The reviewed dissertation represents a conscientiously conducted scientific-applied study in an area of significant relevance.

I find the formulated goals and tasks to be achieved. The scientific and scientific-practical contributions can be defined as real achievements of the doctoral candidate. All of this is a basis for giving a **positive assessment of the dissertation** and recommending to the respected members of the Scientific Jury to cast a positive vote for Elena Todorova to obtain the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.7 "Administration and Management."

January 7, 2024, Varna

Prepared by:

Заличено на основание чл. 5,
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)
2016/679

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. D. Dobrev/

