

Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski

OPINION

**of Prof. Neno Pavlov
Doctor of Economics (PhD)**

Subject: *competition for appointment in the academic office of "Associated Professor" in the field of higher education "Social, business and legal sciences", Professional field 3.8. Economics (political economy — microeconomics and labour market at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of the Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski*

Position of the person producing the Opinion: member of a scientific jury under a procedure for appointment in the academic office of "associated professor", with a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences.

Applicant for appointment in the academic office of "associated professor" subject to a competitive process:

Stefan Atanasov Raychev, PhD, academic lecturer at the Plovdiv University P. Hilendarski.

Grounds for drafting the Opinion: Order No. P33-4132/25.08.2020 of the Rector of the University and a Decision of the scientific jury from the incorporation meeting.

1. Background of the applicant in the competition

Stefan Atanasov Raychev, PhD, was born on 17.09.1984 in the town of Pazardzhik. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree (BA) in the specialty of Political Science (2007) and a Master's degree (MA) in Human Resources Management at the Plovdiv University (2009). He was also awarded a Doctor's degree in Political Science after a doctorate study (2013-2016) at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of the Plovdiv University. He completed an outgoing academic mobility project under Erasmus+ Programme at the University of Valladolid, Kingdom of Spain, in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The start of the academic career of Mr. Raychev, Ph.D. is associated with the holding of the position of an assistant at the Economics Department of the Plovdiv University as of 30.09.2016, and since October 2017 until present - the position of a senior assistant at the University. The applicant has acquired professional and practical experience at the position of a Product Manager at Yavor Ltd., Pazardzhik (2008-2012).

He is fluent in the English language, both writing and speaking.

The scientific interests of Senior Assistant Raychev are in the field of the labour market, the impact of globalization on the employment and employment relations; the economy of labour and the public sector, the public policies on the labour market, the economic growth, the policies related to poverty and inequality.

The summarized biographical reference presents the applicant as an **academic lecturer with academic experience, distinctive career orientation and research competences in the professional field of the open competition procedure.**

The submitted scientific production and the set of official documents are prepared in compliance with the law, **for the purposes of assessment and taking a decision on the designation of the applicant to be employed in the academic office of “assistant professor”.**

2. Assessment of the education and lecturing activity

The applicant for an “assistant professor” has an officially certified academic experience of a total of 8 years, of which 2 years and 9 months as a senior assistant, whereby meeting the requirement of Article 24(1)(2) of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. He has a sufficient volume of university and extra-university educational and pedagogical practice in full-time, extramural and distance studies in the framework of the following academic courses: “Economics”, “Labour Economy”, “Microeconomy” and “Economy of the Public Sector”.

According to the submitted record, over the last four subsequent academic years (2016-2017; 2017-2018; 2018-2019; 2019-2020) he has completed 1765 academic hours of university practice; respectively 436 hours on an annual average in academic studies, and 345 hours of extra-university practice.

During the last three-year period he has registered participation in the drafting of 2 textbooks and teaching aids, of new Bachelor’s degree programs, in the adaptation of courses in a foreign language for teaching of incoming foreign students under the Erasmus programme, as well as in scientific management and peer-review of Master’s degree theses.

The analysis of the lecturing and scientific and methodological work, together with the published textbooks and teaching aids present the applicant as a qualified **lecturer, with possibilities to continue developing his scientific potential to a higher quality academic level.**

3. Overall assessment of the scientific research activity

The scientific research activity of Mr. Raychev, Ph.D. presented for assessment covers publications of all scientific genres and academic activities, respectively:

First, publications submitted for peer-review- 22, satisfying the requirements of the valid academic standards in the country and at the University with the following structure: **monographies** - 2(9 %); **a collective monography** -1(5 %); **papers** -1(5 %/) in Scopus; **scientific articles** - 12, (54 %); **scientific reports** -4(18 %); **textbooks, books and teaching aids-** 2 (9 %/).

In terms of topic, the publications cover the following fields of the academic specialty: Political economy- microeconomics and labour market, with a focus on the condition, dynamics and the policies on the labour market, employment, unemployment and employment relations, the economic and social dimensions and the effects of the interventions (regulations) of the state on the labour market.

Of the submitted publications- 5 (23%) are independently prepared and 17(77%) are in co-authorship, respectively 2 monographies, 1 collective monography, 1 paper, 8 articles, 4 scientific reports and 1 teaching aid, for which dividing protocols have been correctly presented between the different authors.

Most of the publications are in Bulgarian language - 12 (54,5%), and in English language - 10 (45,5%), respectively papers- 1 in Scopus, scientific articles - 5, scientific reports - 4.

Second, compliance with the minimum scientometric requirements for holding the academic position of “associated professor” - on the grounds of the information in the attached record I do confirm that both with respect to the different groups of parameters and cumulatively Mr. Raychev, PhD meets and exceeds the minimum criterion for number of points (400 points) according to the state and university standard with the accumulated total of 463,9 points, including with respect to the references to author’s works, assessing the attitude and interest of the scientific community towards the considered range of problems and the achieved scientific results.

Third, the applicant participates as an expert in a university project and two national projects under European programmes within the period 2015-2020, in national and international scientific forums, as well as in moderation of conference events of students and doctoral students.

My conclusion is that the range of topics of the scientific activity of the applicant is fully focused on the professional field of the announced competition. It has been completed within the period following the award of the doctor's degree and completely satisfies the requirements of the Rules and Regulations for Development of the Academic Staff of Plovdiv University. A research work has been presented on the topic of „*Social cohesion (National, regional and structural dimensions in the context of Bulgaria - EU - Western Balkans)*“, Paisii Hilendarski Publishing House, Plovdiv, 2019, in due compliance with the provision of Article 24(1)(3) of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

4. Assessment of research results and scientific contributions

The dominant thematic line in the scientific research of Mr. Raychev, PhD which makes him recognizable among the scientific community is the detailed statistic and econometric analysis of the social cohesion in a regional, national and structural aspect, the effective purposeful use of European funds under the Cohesion policy item, the level of convergence between the Western Balkans, Bulgaria and the average European level in the EU, the condition and the policies for development of the labour market.

With the approval of the submitted Scientific contributions record the following summarizing conclusions may be made about the quality and the scientific and applied value of the contributory points:

First, modern knowledge, approaches and methodology (for use of graphical, tabular, dynamic, rank and correlation analysis) in the complex survey and assessment of the social cohesion in the EU-28 as a convergence process in multiple directions across the relation “Bulgaria - Western Balkans - EU” have been studied, systematized, reworked and enriched. A successful attempt has been made for that purpose for a scientific transfer of specialized knowledge resulting in enrichment of the scientific specialty of the competition.

Second, the in-depth analysis of the arguments and grounds for solution of the fundamental problem related to the choice between the interdependent alternative policies in the economy, i.e. state intervention and free market, is highly contributory. The meaningful pros and cons of both argumentations are revealed for that purpose, proposing a choice of a leading assessment criterion in the finding of the appropriate balance between them, to be based on the principles of fairness and effectiveness, without giving either of them absolute power in the economic policy.

Third, the virtues of the scientific production are supplemented by the profound analyses, the skilful defence of particular argumentations and opinions on the significant role of state intervention on the labour market complied with the peculiarities of its mechanism and the unique resource which is supplied and demanded, in the context of the related public policies. The detailed knowledge of the academic discussions related to the researched topics and the documents (political and regulatory) applied on a national and European level is impressive.

Fourth, the vision for systematic and logical representation of the theoretical discussion, of statistical and mathematical models for assessment of the impact on the economic activity and growth, on poverty and inequality. These find a particularly remarkable application in the study of the opportunity for a joint active influence of the state on both processes through its inherent instruments and measures, in the context of the labour market, the economic and social dimensions of the national economy.

Fifth, the theoretical and empirical summaries and findings made in relation to lifelong learning, as politics, technology and social entrepreneurship have a factor impact on the labour market. The attempt to survey the social enterprises in Bulgaria with their accompanying problems related to financing, recruitment and use of personnel, development of entrepreneurial skills, provision of institutional and legislative resources, the larger transparency and efficiency in the work of institutions, etc., is contributory in nature.

The presented scientific publications are a personal achievement and product of the applicant's research efforts. I have not found any direct and indirect data of deviations from the norm of scientific ethics and plagiarism under the procedure, as laid down in the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules and Regulations for Development of the Academic Staff of Plovdiv University.

The information used is highly reliable and does not raise any suspicions as to its relevance. Mr. Raychev, PhD. is a regular member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

In the submitted scientific and applied science works for participation in the competition I have not been able to identify any weaknesses that could affect the final positive assessment of the opinion. My recommendation is that the results of the future scientific work of the applicant should reach a wider representativeness and accessibility through more scientific publications in reputable

national and international scientific editions, referenced and indexed in global databases with scientific information, through participation in prestigious international conferences and expert forums of a higher rank in favour of the readers, the students, the management, political and legislative practice.

Conclusion

Making myself acquainted with the career development, the presented competition materials and scientific publications, the analysis of their relevance, importance, contributory achievements and compliance with the minimum scientometric requirements for their scientific value forms grounds to confirm the affirmative opinion and propose to the respected members of the scientific jury that Mr. Stefan Atanasov Raychev, PhD be elected in the academic office of “associated professor” in the professional field of “Economics” (political economy - microeconomics and labour market) at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences” of the Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski.

Sofia, 22.10.2020

Prof. Doctor of Economics Neno Pavlov