

# OPINION

by **Stela Stoyanova Raleva PhD**

Associate Professor at Department of Economics – Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“  
Scientific Speciality „Political Economy (Microeconomics and Macroeconomics)“

on the materials submitted for participation in a competition  
for the academic position Associate Professor  
at Plovdiv University (PU) "Paisii Hilendarski"

Field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences

Professional field: 3.8 Economics (Political Economy – Public Sector Economics and Social Policy)

The competition for the academic position Associate Professor was announced in the State Gazette, Issue 94/12 November 2021 г. and on the website of Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences (FESS). The candidate in the competition is **Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Blaga Petrova Madzhurova** from the Department of Economics of PU.

## 1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

### *Information about the competition*

By virtue of Order № ПД-21-43 of 11 January 2022 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" I was appointed a member of the scientific jury for a competition for the academic position **Associate professor** at PU in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics (Political Economy – Public Sector Economics and Social Policy), announced for the needs of the Department of Economics of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences.

The **only candidate** who has applied for the competition is Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Blaga Petrova Madzhurova, a lecturer at PU.

The set of electronic materials presented by Blaga Madzhurova is in accordance with the Regulations for development of the academic staff of PU.

### *Information about the candidate*

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Blaga Madzhurova has a Bachelor degree in Marketing from UNWE and a Master degree in Healthcare Management from the Plovdiv Medical University. In 2017 she obtained a Doctoral degree in Political Economy at PU. She is registered as a mediator at the Ministry of Justice and the International Mediation Institute, the Netherlands. From 2015 to 2017 she was a part-time lecturer, and since 2017 she has been a Chief Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics of FESS at PU. Mrs. Madzhurova is a secretary of the Faculty Commission for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. She worked as a junior expert and chief expert in the Municipality of Plovdiv, as a sales representative in PT Holding AD, as an expert on programs and projects in the Plovdiv Foundation - European Capital of Culture, and as a project manager of the „Building a Youth center in Plovdiv" project. From 2012 to 2013 she was a senior expert in the Directorate of Marketing, Advertising and Information in Tourism of the Ministry of Economy and Energy. From August until November 2014 she was Head of the Political Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Social Policy and a member of the Council for European Affairs. She has participated in projects under the INTERREG 4 program and the OP of EU, as well as in projects under the Research Fund of the University of Plovdiv. She has carried out mobility under the Erasmus+ program at universi-

ties in Spain and Italy. She speaks German, English, Spanish and Russian. She is a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria.

#### *Fulfillment the requirements for holding an academic position*

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Blaga Madzhurova has presented a reference note certifying that she meets the minimal national requirements under article 1a, paragraph 1 of the Regulation on the Implementation of the Act on Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and all of the necessary evidence has been submitted. She is participating in the competition with 17 publications, including her monograph as a habilitation work; 2 other monographs in co-authorship, which are treated as work written on her own considering the volume of the text created by the candidate; one book based on the PhD dissertation; one chapter of a collective monograph; one textbook in co-authorship; and 11 studies, journal articles and papers from scientific conferences. Her habilitation work titled „Social Evils - Relation to Macroeconomic Determinants and Policies for Overcoming Them“ fully complies with the topic of the competition. Although not explicitly stated by the candidate, some of the publications have been published in journals that are referenced and indexed in the worldwide databases of scientific information. 15 of the publications have been written in co-authorship and 8 of them are written in English. A reference to 7 noticed citations in scientific works is presented, as one of them is in Scopus and another - in Web of Science. Based on the submitted publications, a conclusion may be drawn that they do not repeat the publications from the previous procedures of the candidate and that in terms of number, content and topics, they are fully in accordance with the qualification scope of the competition and go beyond the minimal national requirements for holding the respective academic position.

From the information attached, it becomes clear that the candidate participating in the competition is a co-author of a textbook, has prepared and delivered lectures, participated in research projects and presented publications in the scientific specialization of the competition, including publications in scientific journals refereed and indexed in Scopus and the Web of Science. Thus, she fully meets all the additional requirements of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski“.

## **2. General characteristic of the activity of the candidate**

#### *Evaluation of the teaching and methodological activity*

Chief Assistant Professor Blaga Madzhurova has seven-year experience in teaching and educational activity. In the period between academic year 2017/2018 and 2020/2021 she had 1816 hours of teaching with 1366 of them being classroom (curricular) activity. During the same period she gave lectures in Social Policy, Social Policy and Social Programmes, Public Services Management, Economics, Microeconomics and Macroeconomics for students of different degree courses and forms of education. These degree courses are closely related to the topic of the competition and correspondent with her scientific interests, her publications and the achieved research results.

The applicant has actively worked on the preparation of new study courses and programmes. She has developed adapted courses in Social Policy in English and Microeconomics in English and a completely new curriculum in Public Services Management and a similar curriculum in co-authorship in Social Policy. A number of tests, handbooks of problems and case studies and other forms for testing students' knowledge have been created, which have been designed for administering in an online environment in the past few years. A logical result of her teaching activity and educational and methodological are the published textbook in Social Policy in co-authorship.

Dr Madzhurova works actively with students and doctoral students as a moderator in their scientific forums and a referee of students' and doctoral thesis. It is worth pointing out her participation in the project “Policies for supporting young people in their life cycle. A comparative analysis of policies for life-long learning and integration through education and work in Europe” under the “Hori-

zon2020” programme and in the National Programme “Young Scientists and Post-Doctoral Students”.

#### *Brief overview of the submitted scientific publications*

The most important among these publications is the habilitation work “Social Evils – Relation to Macroeconomic Determinants and Policies for Overcoming Them” (№1). This is the applicant’s research of macroeconomic activity, labour market and the social problems and of the existing interdependencies between them. The paper presents a summarized review of various theoretical beliefs about the relation between economic growth, inequality in income distribution and poverty and comments on some of the underlying causes. By using a wide range of empirical data and implementing descriptive statistics and regressive analysis a comprehensive research of the dynamics of key macroeconomic indicators, basic labour market indicators and leading gauges of the social and economic issues in Bulgaria and the EU. Based on the conducted empirical analysis key policies for overcoming unfavourable developments in the social sphere are outlined and justified.

Similar subject matter but reviewed from a different angle is analyzed in publications №2 and №3. The research subject in publication №8 is the social cohesion between Bulgaria, the EU and the western Balkans whereas in publication №4 attention is paid to the social similarity in education. Publication №5 studies the issues of working poor people in the former socialist countries currently members of the EU. Publication №10 reviews social entrepreneurship in Bulgaria in the context of the EU integration process. Publication №16 also focuses on social subject matter, based on the dissertation of the candidate, as well as all the 7 topics/chapters in the textbook submitted for review which are written by the candidate.

The second group of publications - №6, №9 and №11 focus on the presentation of the long life learning policies at European level. In the first one, the efficiency of these policies is evaluated, the second covers their impact on young people. Publication №11 presents an intersectoral analysis of the regional networks in the development of the specified policies which are presented by country.

The third group of publications - №12-15 refer to innovations and their impact on economic growth and the labour market. Publication №14 is more specific since it reviews the role of higher education institutions and business aimed at creating and disseminating innovations.

Publication №7 is relatively independent and studies budget revenues, budget spending and fiscal consolidation of the new EU member countries.

#### *Major scientific and practice-related contributions*

The major scientific and practice-related contributions of the research of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Blaga Petrova Madzhurova may be systemized as follows:

- First: The substantiated review of the social policy of Bulgaria and the EU in the context of the dynamics of the macroeconomic activity, macroeconomic imbalances and the labour market and their social significance.
- Second: The classification of different theoretical beliefs about the interrelation between macroeconomic activity, predominantly economic growth, on the one hand, and income inequality and poverty, on the other, as well as the disclosure of some of their most important advantages and disadvantages.
- Third: The characteristic peculiarities in the dynamics of the key macroeconomic indicators and selected indices for the labour market in Bulgaria and the EU, the disclosed specifics in the convergence levels and the evaluated correlation dependencies between them.
- Fourth: The studied changes in people living in households with low intensity of economic activity; the population at risk of poverty and experiencing material deprivation; children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, the number of working poor and Gene’s coefficient in

Bulgaria and the EU and the measured correlation and regional dependencies with the changes in the key macroeconomic indicators.

- Fifth: The targeted key milestones and specific measures of the policies for limiting social problems in Bulgaria related to the stimulation of economic growth and the labour market development and the interpretation of their capacity and challenges of the EU example.
- Sixth: The tendencies analyzed and the challenges that social entrepreneurship in Bulgaria faces and outlining the specifics of the social policy in the field of labour and employment in health care.

### **3. Critical remarks and recommendations**

I have two main recommendations to the candidate:

The first one is to continue to deepen her research in the field of social topics by addressing in greater detail the clarification of the factor dependence of the social changes and to more comprehensive interpretation of the achieved empirical results.

My second recommendation is to outline more clearly her stance as a researcher with individual views and to prove more convincingly her scientific contributions. This can happen with the preparation of individual publications and/or by participating in collective works which provide the opportunity for strictly differentiating the work of the individual co-authors and for the accurate and clear distinction and reflection in the division protocols.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the teaching experience of **Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Blaga Petrova Madzhurova**, on her publishing activity and her scientific results, as well as on her intensive work on scientific and educational projects, I consider that she is an appropriate candidate for the called competition. Taking into consideration the abovementioned and the fact that she fully meets the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the additional requirements of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, accepted in accordance with the Regulations for Development of the Academic Staff of PU, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and recommend to the members of the Scientific panel to propose to the Faculty Council of FESS to vote in favour of her election to the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 3.8 Economics (Political Economy - Public Sector Economics and Social Policy).

11.03.2022 г.

**Signature:** .....

/Associate professor Dr. Stela Raleva/