

REVIEW

by Tzveta Yordanova Zafirova, PhD - professor at the University of Economics, Varna

based on the submitted materials in regards to the competitive selection procedure of applicants for the tenure-track academic job position 'Associate Professor' at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"

in the Field of Higher Education 3. *Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences*

Professional Field 3.7. *Administration and Management (Fundamentals of Management, Competitiveness of Business Organization)*

The competitive selection procedure for the "Associate Professor" job position is publicly announced both at the State Gazette, Issue 92, as of November 11, 2022, and at the website of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" – to meet the needs of the Department of Management and Quantitative Methods in Economics at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences. In reference to this, it is the Chief Assistant Professor Gergana Dimitrova Dimitrova, PhD of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski", who applied as a candidate for this job position.

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Candidate

It is the Order № RD-21-54 of January 16, 2023 of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" (UP), which designates me as a Full Member on duty for the Scientific Jury Panel to deliver professional assertion on employment for the academic job position "**Associate Professor**" at UP in the field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences; Professional Field 3.7. Administration and Management (*Fundamentals of Management, Competitiveness of Business Organization*), **announced by** the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences (FESS) **to meet the needs of** the Department of Management and Quantitative Methods in Economics (MQME) of the FESS.

It has to be stated that for the announced competitive selection procedure, it is **only one candidate**, who has applied for this position:

Chief Assistant Professor Gergana Dimitrova Dimitrova, PhD of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

The submitted set of materials of Chief Ass. Prof. G. Dimitrova, PhD is duly prepared as a paper-bound set, and it is in compliance to the *Rules of Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv* (RDASUP). It includes the next documents:

- a request to the Rector for admission to the competition;
- a CV prepared toward requirements of the *European format*;
- a Master Degree diploma;

- a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degree diploma;
- a list of scientific publications;
- separation protocols;
- a list of citations;
- a reference for compliance with the minimum national requirements;
- a reference for compliance with the minimum additional faculty requirements;
- an annotation of materials in Bulgarian;
- an annotation of materials in English;
- self-assessment of contributions;
- a declaration of originality and authenticity of the enclosed documents;
- transcripts of protocols from the Department Council, Faculty Council, and Academic Council in connection with the competition;
- a State Gazette announcing the competition collection procedure;
- a length of service certificate;
- documents for teaching practice;
- research documents;
- documents in accordance with additional requirements of the respective faculty.

The applicant Chief Assistant Prof. G. Dimitrova, PhD submitted a total of 30 scientific papers, studies - 1, 1 monograph, 1 book on the defended PhD thesis, 1 textbook and List of 26 scientific articles and papers. In the current assertion is not included the book (*Annex 5.2*) because it's a PhD-related publication.

Therefore, classification of the 30 scientific papers by the standards of compliance used in Bulgaria and abroad, is as it follows: 21 papers are popularized in Bulgaria (13 of which are in English language and 11 are in Bulgarian) and other 9 papers (including 8 in Scopus and WoS) are published abroad in English (*Annex 5*).

2. A Brief Biographic Data of the Applicant

Chief Ass. Prof. G. Dimitrova, PhD was born in 1972. She holds a Bachelor Degree in "Business Management" in University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" and a Master Degree Accounting and Control" in Agricultural University Plovdiv.

After Graduation, she has valuable practical experience in positions, such as an expert in "Sugar Factory Cristal" Ltd., an office manager in "Technotrade" Co, a manager at "G&D Consult", an administrative manager in "Marina Inkaso Group" Ltd. and an administrative secretary in University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski".

During the period 2016-2019 she is studying in a full-time PhD programme at the Department of Management and Quantitative Methods in Economics of the FESS in University of Plovdiv. She defends her dissertation and obtains the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degree in the science specialty 05.02.18 Economics and Management (Industry) – *Annex 4*. In 2011 she starts working as a teacher at the Department of Management and Quantitative Methods in Economics of the FESS in UP.

She is a participant and organizer of different scientific events - conferences, round tables, public academic lectures, etc. She is fluent in English. She is a member of the Union of Scientists – Plovdiv.

3. General Characteristics of the Applicant's Activities

Estimation of the academic activities and preparation of the applicant

It is evident from the submitted Certificate of Work Experience that Dr. G. Dimitrova has over 24 years work experience, incl. a pedagogical experience 4 years in the University of Plovdiv (*Annex 13*).

She has elaborated and presented with multimedia presentations the next academic courses: *Fundamentals of Management, Management in Telecommunication, Competitiveness of Business Organization, Sports Management, Marketing, Sales and Sales Policy (Annex 14)*. It should be noted, that the academic courses of the applicant are connected with the theme of the competitive selection procedure - Administration and management. Her academic courses have also a practical focus, based on her experience as an expert.

Chief Assistant Dr. Gergana Dimitrova uses the possibilities of information technology in teaching activities (*Annex 14*). She organizes successfully with their help the educational process, the current verification of students' knowledge and exams.

The own training course “Competitiveness of the business organization”, developed by Gergana Dimitrova, is adapted for the training of PhD students in the doctoral programs 3.8 Economics and Management (Industry) and 3.7 Social Management (Competitiveness of the Social Organization). This show the candidate's growth in the topics related to the field of the competitive selection procedure.

The her average annual workload is 400 hours and her auditorium teaching load for the academic 2022/2023 year is accounted at 485 hours of lectures and seminars (converted to academic exercises) (*Annex 14*). She has a teaching load that meets, and even exceeds, the approved annual mandatory teaching load at the University of Plovdiv. Through it, Gergana Dimitrova has managed to establish herself as a teacher and to gain experience needed as a lecturer.

In addition, according to the submitted set of materials in this competitive procedure, she is the author of a genuine textbook “Competitiveness of Business Organization”. She demonstrates in it her in-depth knowledge of theory and her ability to structure and clarify very well the content of the training material. This textbook is a good basis for obtaining knowledge and skills of students and PhD students in the field.

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the academic activities substantiates the assertion that Dr. G. Dimitrova's R&D activities fully correspond to the requirements of the tenure-track job position of ‘Associate Professor’.

Evaluation of the scientific and applied science activities of the applicant

Of the submitted 30 scientific publications, there are 12 individual papers and 18 papers with co-authors as follows: 7 papers with 1 co-author, 6 publications with 2 co-authors, 5 papers with 3 co-authors. They include: 1 monograph, 1 study, 1 textbook, 1 book with published PhD dissertation, 26 scientific papers. 9 publications are published in English (of which 8 are in *Scopus* and *Web of Science*) and 21 are in Bulgarian (*Annex 5*). 1 article is in a journal with impact factor. The scientific results are presented in total of 12 International scientific conferences in Bulgaria.

The submitted scientific papers in the competitive selection procedure for the tenure-track academic job position of ‘Associate Professor’ are in the field of the science specialty “Administration and Management”. They are a result of deep scientific surveys as well as the implementation of new investigation tools. Affidavit of support of the quality of the mentioned above papers and publications, is the fact that 8 of them (7 articles and 1 report) are subject to references and indexes in world-renowned scientific information databases (*Scopus* and *Web of Science*), based on their importance and scientific contributions.

The research activity of Gergana Dimitrova includes the participation in total of 8 scientific and applied-scientific projects including 2 International, 4 National and 2 Faculty (*Annex 15*). In 1 of the research projects she is a consultant, and in the others - a participant. These facts serve as an evidence of her research and application skills. The results of these projects are published in prestigious scientific editions.

Contributions (scientific, applied-scientific, applied) and citations

The applicant in this competitive procedure has submitted enough scientific papers that are actual, relevant and are devoted to important problems of the theory and, in practical manner, in the field of Administration and Management.

The most significant from the presented publications is undoubtedly the monographic study "Cluster Approach to Competitive Positioning of Bulgarian Wine Production" (reviewers: Prof. Dr. Tz. Zafirova and Assoc. Prof. Dr. T. Dimitrova) in a volume 176 pages. G. Dimitrova presents in it

herself as a built researcher, shows enviable competence and skills to study, systematize and structure theoretical formulations, to critically analyze and evaluate them. She applies skillfully appropriate tools in the research, brings out the problems and proposes alternative solutions.

The topic is current and very significant due to the fact that it is related to the challenges of a highly competitive environment in the wine industry. The author shows both a very good knowledge of literature in the field and problems in practice. A significant number of scientific publications have been studied, various opinions have been analyzed, good world and Bulgarian practices have been studied. Conclusions and assessments have been made with recommendations for their practical application in SMEs in our wine country. The aim is related to the reorientation of wine producers as they to form the right strategic focus. The need for application of the cluster approach to increase the competitiveness of Bulgarian wine production through the construction of wine clusters through the development of wine tourism has been proven.

The monograph examines the extremely in-depth theoretical foundations of competitiveness in its various levels and aspects, as well as related concepts. The competitive environment of the wine industry on the world market for the period 2010-2019 has been studied in depth: sales, production, product, structure and consumption and Bulgaria`s place in it. The results of this analysis will serve the practice in the field of strategic decision making. The competitive position of the Bulgarian wine production on the world wine market is determined according to the achieved levels of competitiveness and occupied market share.

The good world practices of wine clusters have been studied. The main factors (prefixes) for their formation in our country are derived on this basis. The existing ones in Bulgaria are analyzed and classified according to different classification signs and aspects, and their characteristics are derived. The competitive status of Bulgarian SMEs in the wine industry has also been determined. A number of practical elements of the process of their formation have been studied in detail. The thesis is defended that they should develop wine tourism as a suitable alternative to their future. The good Bulgarian practices for promoting the wine areas have been studied.

The monograph also presents the results of various studies by the author in 2020, conducted with owners, managers, experts and wine users. Their goal is to clarify various aspects related to determining the competitiveness and competitive positioning of wine production in our country. The author demonstrates in-depth knowledge of both the studied field and the application of the research tools in them.

The results of these studies are of particular interest to the practice in the field of wine industry, incl. and SMEs in it. They will assist their management in choosing the right strategic

focus. The above mentioned proves the applied scientific importance of the monograph of Chief Assistant. Dr. Gergana Dimitrova.

The other publications presented in the competition are development of theoretical formulations and practical solutions of modern aspects related to the processes of management of organizations and their competitiveness in the changing environment. They are the result of in-depth research, the application of modern tools and show an excellent knowledge of theory and practice in the field.

There are some different contributions in the publications of the candidate, which could be summarized and formulated as follows:

Scientific contributions:

- The theory of management is supplemented with new opinions, classifications and systematizations in its field related to competitiveness at different levels (macro, meso and micro) and in different areas (publ. №№5.1, 5.3, 5.7, 5.18, 5.21, 5.25, 5.28, 5.29 and 5.30 of the List of Scientific Publications).

- The scientific knowledges about competition are developed and enriched by systematizing and conceptualizing of the application of the cluster approach in the management of competitiveness in the formation of various clusters, incl. wine and educational (publ. №№5.1, 5.5, 5.6, 5.9, 5.13, 5.18, 5.20, 5.21, 5.22, 5.24, 5.25, 5.26, 5.28, 5.29 and 5.30 of the List of Scientific Publications).

- The theory of competition is enriched by a proposed conceptual model for generating competitive advantages based on a developed system of indicators for assessing the competitiveness of the organization (publ. №№5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.7, 5.11, 5.12, 5.16, 5.20 and 5.23 of the List of Scientific Publications).

- The theory of management of education is supplemented, including the functioning and development of universities in a competitive environment, with the formulation and justification of a new opinion on the determination of their competitiveness and competitive position (publ. №№ 5.5, 5.18, 5.21, 5.25 and 5.26 of the List of Scientific Publications).

- It has been proven through various studies, incl. empirical, the need to apply a cluster approach to SMEs in the wine industry in Bulgaria through the creation and sustainable functioning of wine clusters for the development of wine tourism (publ. №№5.1, 5.14, 5.15, 5.17 and 5.19 of the List of Scientific Publications)

Applied science contributions:

- Scientifically is justified, developed and applied modern toolkit for research and solving management problems related to the processes in the competitive environment and its challenges

(publ. №№5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.7, 5.9, 5.10, 5.18, 5.21, 5.24, 5.25, 5.28, 5.29 и 5.30 of the List of Scientific Publications)

- The factors (prerequisites) for formation wine clusters in Bulgaria on the basis of a study of good practices and world experience in the field are formulated; the their essential characteristics, advantages and disadvantages are outlined and justified, and the possibilities for their application are indicated (publ. №№ 5.1 of the List of Scientific Publications).

- The methodology for competitive analysis is enriched with a proposed new systematic approach for creating an aggregate composite indicator for assessing the competitiveness of industrial organizations and the attractiveness of the industry, and it is tested in wine industry, which has proven its applicability in practice in the field (publ. №№.5.3, 5.7 and 5.11 of the List of Scientific Publications).

- The methodological foundations have been developed and practical and have been proposed applied solutions for SMEs in Bulgaria for the formation of wine clusters, incl. has been developed a conceptual design for this purpose; it has been tested and it shows the possibilities for application of the cluster approach in their practice (publ. №№. 5.1, 5.4, 5.8, 5.14, 5.15 and 5.17 of the List of Scientific Publications).

Applied contributions:

- The practice of the wine industry in Bulgaria has been enriched by making a thorough multi-layered study in various aspects, according to numerous indicators and indices of its place and role in the world markets, the problems and trends in its development are outlined (publ. №№5.1, 5.4, 5.12, 5.20 and 5.23 of the List of Scientific Publications).

- The competitive position of Bulgarian wine production on the world wine market is determined according to the achieved levels of competitiveness and the market share occupied, as well as the competitive status of SMEs from the wine industry in Bulgaria (publ. №№5.1, 5.4, 5.8, 5.15, 5.20 and 5.23 of the List of Scientific Publications).

- Recommendations and proposals from a practical and applied aspect regarding the indicated opportunities for competitive positioning of Bulgarian wine production by building regional wine clusters aimed at the development of wine tourism for the imposition of wines of authentic local varieties are outlined, systematized and summarized (pub. №№5.1, 5.8, 5.15 и 5.21 of the List of Scientific Publications).

In summary, the scientific contributions of the applicant may be summarized in the following categories: **enriching and development of the existing knowledge** in the field of administration and management and **application of the scientific contributions in the practice**.

In the submitted a reference for compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements (*Annex 7*) in Group D are included a total of 23 citations - 14 of them are in monographs and others of the applicant's publications made by famous Bulgarian scientists (*Annex 7*). Furthermore, 9 of them are in world-renowned scientific information databases SCOPUS/ WoS. 8 citations are from Bulgarian scientists, incl. only 1 in Bulgarian. 21 of the citations are from 2020 to 2022., as 6 of others are in her own publications, and the others are co-authored, but in the areas of her scientific and research interests.

A conclusion from the sufficient number of citations is about the relevance and importance of the scientific publications of Chief Ass Prof. Dr. Gergana Dimitrova

In the submitted set of documents in this competitive selection procedure, the candidate has applied a document - *A reference for compliance with the minimum national and additional faculty requirements (Annex 7)*. It includes a reference of compliance with the national requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) in the Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences. Gergana Dimitrova has 737.5 tons at a minimum of 400 points, specified in the Reference for fulfillment of the national requirements of (ADASRB). If 105 points of the additional requirements of the FESS are required, there are 358.5 points. (*Annex 8.2*). Or the total number of her points is 1096 points for the required 505 points that is twice as much.

The conclusion of the results and contributions of the participant in this competitive selection procedure is that the candidate has submitted a sufficient number of scientific publications, published after the materials employed for the defence of the PhD Degree and after meeting the occupation criteria of the academic job position of 'Chief Assistant Professor'. It has been over fulfilled the minimum requirements of the *ADASRB* (announced at the State Gazette/56, 6.07. 2018) for the indicators the academic position of an 'Associate Professor' in the field 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences (*Annex 7*). By structure and content they meet, and even exceed, the indicators of the national criteria and the additional faculty requirements for occupying the academic position of an 'Associate Professor' (according the requirements of the FESS, Protocol №134/22.04.2019).

The analysis of the scientific publications substantiates the assertion that Dr. G. Dimitrova's R&D activities are distinguished by their emphasized practical value. She is an expert as in theory, as in the application of appropriate tools for investigation and overcoming important management problems.

4. Evaluation of the Personal Contribution of the Applicant

The applicant in this competitive selection procedure has submitted a declaration of originality and authenticity required by the *Rules of Application of the ADASRB (Annex 12)*. In addition, there are divisive protocols for the joint publications (*Annex 6.1*), reflecting the personal contribution of the author. The content of the scientific papers, the applied documents and the participation of Chief Assistant Gergana Dimitrova, PhD in many Bulgarian and international scientific publications and forums confirm the conclusion that the above mentioned are an individual contribution of the author.

5. Critical Notes and Recommendations

Dr. Gergana Dimitrova submits for participation in this competition scientific works in which clearly stand out excellent theoretical training and accumulated expertise.

I have no critical comments to challenge the candidate's main contributions. Having focused in particular on the future scientific activities of the applicant in the announced competitive selection procedure, it has to be stated the next recommendations:

- In general, the subject of researches of Gergana Dimitrova is focused over specific management fields (competitive and competitiveness) and directly connected with them. I recommend her with the same depth and determination to focus on other areas in her future research.

- In order to deepen her achievements so far and her future scientific growth, I recommend to candidate to be more active in the publication of independent textbooks, studies and monographs.

These recommendations do not detract from the contributions of Chief Ass. Prof. Gergana Dimitrova, PhD and do not affect the overall positive assessment of her merits. They should be considered as a milestone consideration for her future scientific work and further investigations.

6. Personal Impressions

I know the candidate from the procedure for the defence of the Doctoral Degree (PhD), where she defended her dissertation successfully. My impressions are complemented by the materials provided to me in the competition for awarding the academic position of 'Associate Professor'.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Dr. Gergana Dimitrova **meet all the requirements** of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria

(ADASRB), the Rules of Application of the ADASRB, and the corresponding Rules of the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski”.

The candidate has presented a **sufficient number** of scientific publications, published after the materials used in the defence of the Doctoral Degree (PhD) and the acquisition of the academic position of “Chief Assistant Professor” .

The applicant's works have original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, as a representative part of them have been published in journals and scientific papers, published by international academic publishers. Theoretical achievements of the candidate have practical applicability, some of them are directly oriented to the educational work. Dr. Dimitrova's scientific and teaching qualifications are **undoubtedly** professional.

The achieved educational and R&D results by Dr. Gergana Dimitrova **fully** corresponds to the minimum national and additional requirements of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, approved in regards to applying the Rules of the University for the Implementation of *ADASRB*.

After reviewing the materials and scientific works of the applicant submitted in this competitive selection procedure, and having conducted a thorough analysis of their importance along to the scientific and applied contributions contained therein, I reckon that I have sound reasons to deliver my **Positive Assessment** and I recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a Report-Proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences to elect Chief Assistant Professor **Gergana Dimitrova Dimitrova, PhD** for the Academic Position of an “Associate Professor at the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski” in Professional Field 3.7. Administration and Management (*Fundamentals of Management, Competitiveness of Business Organization*)

February, 14th 2023

Reviewer:

(prof. Tzveta Zafirova, PhD)