

STATEMENT

From

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on the materials submitted for participation in the
competition for the academic position of Associate Professor
of Plovdiv Paisii Hilendarski University

Field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; Professional field 3.1.
Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, scientific specialty (Culture and
Communication)

In the competition for the post of 'Associate Professor', announced in the State Gazette , no. 98/19.11.2024 for the needs of the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, as the only candidate participated Dr. Maria Stoyanova Petrova, Assistant Professor at the same Department since 2009. The package of materials submitted by her includes the required documents in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv. The candidate participates in the competition with one monograph, three larger articles and seven articles. The monograph, two of the studies, six of the articles are in Bulgarian and the remaining two articles - in English. The publications and citations submitted by the candidate meet the minimum national requirements as well as the additional requirements of the University of Plovdiv for the academic position of Associate Professor. Due to the coauthorship with Dr. Petrova in one of the articles, it will not be taken into account by me in my opinion below on her scientific production.

The attached documents show the activity of Dr. Petrova in the field of teaching, working with students, publishing, participating in and organizing scientific forums, as well as participating in research projects. She also works towards integrating her scientific results into the various courses she teaches at Plovdiv University. Such an approach to meet theory with practice also helps to update the curricula and to integrate the results of research into the enrichment of teaching methods and issues.

Asst. prof. Dr. Maria Petrova participates in the competition for the academic position of "associate professor" with a habilitation thesis entitled *"Chitalishte and time. Institutional building and social transformation. From the pages of the chronicle book"*, published by the University Publishing House "Paisiy Hilendarski" in 2024. The study is based on several years of work primarily with documents and archival materials and represents a micro-study of a narrow issue, which is placed in a broader socio-historical and politico-economic framework. The focus is on the chronicle book written over several decades by the personnel of the community center in the village of Pchelarovo. The three chapters carefully show the

thematic diversity of the documentation in this distinctive document. An approach to the generality of the themes in the chronicle book is followed (first chapter). The second chapter makes a more in-depth analysis of the latest thematic fields and contexts, which occur in a conditional division into two periods in which events are documented in the chronicle book (before and after 1945). The third chapter already provides additional contextual explanation of state policies and legislation, which can help understand the specifics of both the community center activity and its representation or not in the chronicle book. A comparative analysis of the data in the research document with other administrative and archival documents is made, a deeper look at other community center documentation is made, as well as tracking of national and local community center policies through national legislation and the specialized press. The approach chosen by the author is experimental, considering that an “ethnological approach to the study of archival documents” is applied (p. 12). It is stated that the collected material is approached according to the principles of “grounded theory” – empirical data are the basis on which analytical constructs are built” (ibid.). For me, the argumentation of the theory itself and its use is not fully justified. An explicit and clear research question is not provided too. On pages 12-13 of the habilitation text Petrova suggests: “Although in common usages grounded theory is built on interviews with interlocutors, its application presupposes the textual deciphering of the interviews, their unification in the scheme and the construction of the theory (Russel 2006: 492 –497) In my case, the text of the chronicle narrative is pre-created and, starting from what is contained in it, I will try to build a responsible scheme”. According to me, it is necessary to distinguish more clearly the diction between the collected field material, transformed into text, but carrying the cultural contexts documented by the researcher in the field, and the “dry” documents created with a specific purpose that is not subject to the researcher’s control. For me, the firm statement on page 15 that the comments and impressions that the author shares on the content of the chronicle book can be considered a kind of field notes is also contradictory.

In the context of the chosen methodology, I would return again to the chosen structure, which applies an approach from a narrow focus to its gradual expansion. It can be assumed that this imitates a field work, in which the researcher first becomes familiar with a narrow context. As the work continues, more internal logics that were previously “not visible” are revealed. In an attempt to analyze the field materials, the micro case is linked to broader, political and economic contexts. This is precisely what happens in all three chapters of the text.

Based on the other texts with which M. Petrova participated in the competition, I can summarize that her research interests are in several areas of the social sciences. The main focus is on studying the processes of transmission and representation of ethnic and local identity, of remembering and forgetting in the context of cultural heritage. Another research field is focused is in the study of institutions (chitalishte and university), again in the context of the more general framework of memory and heritage. Intercultural communication and the interactions of different cultural contexts is also a subject of research and teaching interest.

As for teaching activities, part of the main courses that M. Petrova leads are very close to the competition profile : Culture and Communication. Such are the academic disciplines: Intercultural Communication, Linguistic Anthropology, Practicum "Storytelling and

Anthropology", Stereotypes and Prejudices, Representation of Cultural Heritage in Survival Tourism. The candidate also has active work with students, in the context of conducting summer internships, internships and supervising diploma theses.

Based on the submitted documents, I can conclude that Asst. Prof. Maria Petrova, PhD has the necessary expertise in the field of the competition subject - culture and communication and in the field of heritage. She fully meets the requirements of the current regulatory framework for holding the academic position of "associate professor". Her scientific contributions, related to her teaching, scientific and publication activities, give me reason to propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury of this competition to support the election of Senior Asst. Prof. Dr. Maria Petrova to hold the academic position of "associate professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences (Culture and communication).

16.04.2025

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