

## REVIEWER'S OPINION

by Dr. Georgi Ivanov Shopov,  
Professor at University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"  
on the materials submitted for the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor at the  
University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski",  
by field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.4. Social  
Activities (Social Policies for the Elderly and the Aged People)

In the competition for "Associate Professor", announced in the State Gazette, issue 98/19.11.2024, as the only candidate participated Dr. Tanya Alyosheva Vazova, senior lecturer at University of Plovdiv (PU) "Paisii Hilendarski".

### **1. General presentation of the procedure and the applicant**

By Order No. RD-22-445/18.02.2025 of the Rector of PU "Paisii Hilendarski" I have been appointed a member of the Scientific Jury for the above competition for the academic position of Associate Professor.

The set of materials submitted by the only candidate, Dr. Tanya Vazova, is in accordance with the PU Academic Staff Development Regulations.

She has a PhD in "Economics and Organization of Labor", obtained in 2018 at the UNWE with a dissertation on "Competence models in the long-term care sector". The professional path and growth of the candidate are entirely related to the field of social activities and education: since 2002 she has worked as a manager or consultant in various NGOs and companies providing social services - mainly long-term care in the home environment, and since 2019 and currently - in the Department of Social Activities of the Faculty of Pedagogy. This is indicative of the sustainability of her career choice in both academia and the social services sector.

My personal impressions are from our joint work in the Department of Social Activities, from her work as an assistant on courses taught by me (e.g. "Social Assistance", "Social Inclusion of Children and Students with Special Educational Needs"), as well as from our participation in various scientific forums. My opinion is that my colleague Vazova is a reputable academic teacher and an established researcher in the scientific specialty of Social Action and especially in the field of social policies for the elderly and the elderly.

### **2. General description of the applicant's activities**

#### **2.1. Evaluation of the candidate's teaching and pedagogical activity and preparation**

The annual lecture and extracurricular employment of the chief asst. Dr. Tanya Vazova, according to her official report, significantly exceeds the norm of 360 hours and is increasing. In the academic year 2022-2023 the workload is almost 2 times higher and in the current academic year - 2.4 times higher than the norm. She teaches undergraduate classes in 10 subjects, the majority of which are in the professional field of competition. In the Master's degree in Management of Social Organizations (for specialists and non-specialists), Dr. Vazova lectures on several subjects, including Crisis Interventions and Supervision, Individual Assessment of Social Service Needs and Support, and HRM in the Social Sphere. The classes are for students not only from "Social Activities", but also from "Psychology" and "Social Pedagogy" at the Faculty of Pedagogy of PU. She also works with students outside the

classroom, including the scientific supervision of 4 graduate students. She has also been involved in the development of 4 curricula for the Bachelor's degree and 3 for the Master's degree.

### 2.2. Compliance with the minimum national requirements under Article 2 b of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation (Article 1a, paragraph 1).

According to the report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Article 26 of the LDASRB for the academic position of Associate Professor, the candidate has 555<sup>1</sup> points with a required minimum threshold of 400 points. Dr. T. Vazova also fulfils the additional requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor adopted by the Faculty Council (FC) of the Faculty of Pedagogy:

- With an additional 60 points required for research above the nationally set 200 points for Group D (on author publications), she has 275 points, i.e. - 75 points over the additional threshold.
- When required at least 1 publication in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world known databases, she has submitted in the reference 2, of which 1 has been accepted for publication in the journal. "Medichni perspektivi" - indexed in Scopus and Web of Science".
- With an additional 20 points required above the nationally defined 50 points for group E (on citations and reviews), she has 130 points, i.e. - exceeding the additional threshold by 80 points.
- The additional requirements of the PF regarding the teaching workload at the HEI in the last active academic year have also been exceeded: with a minimum threshold of 30 points, she has 78.5 points, i.e. - more than 2.6 times more.

A list certifying participation in 15 scientific forums (7 of them international) as part of Vazova's research activities I presented as well.

Thus, the candidate Tanya Vazova fully meets both the National Minimum Requirements, according to the Law on Academic Associate Professor (Article 2-b) and the Regulations for its implementation (Article 1a, paragraph 1), as well as the Additional Requirements for the academic position "Associate Professor", set by the PF FS.

### 2.3. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and applied activity.

For this opinion, 22 scientific works are accepted for evaluation - 1 independent monograph-habilitation work and 21 scientific studies, articles and papers (6 of them co-authored). The publications related to the dissertation defense and the competition for "chief assistant" are not included.

Central in the publications is the habilitation monography of T. Vazova "Social Services for the Elderly and the Elderly in Bulgaria: Development, Challenges, Prospects", published in 2024 and in a volume of 169 non-standard pages (about 210 standard pages). 7 of the articles/studies are in English and 3 are published in foreign journals.

The 12 citations in scientific publications in the country and abroad (incl. 7 citations in publications that have been refereed and indexed world-renowned and national databases of scientific information), as well as in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer review, reveal the candidate as a recognizable scientist in the country, but also outside it.

*The publications are the personal work of Dr. Tanya Vazova. I have found no plagiarism in the publications submitted by her. The structure of the scientific and applied activity shows that the candidate focuses not only on the development of publications related to her scientific interests and teaching, but also on participation in scientific events, practical training of students at PU, creation of*

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<sup>1</sup> There is a technical error in the report, where the figure of 280 in Group D, instead of the correct figure of 275 in the first summary table, is shown in the more detailed table of indicators.

curricula, as well as practical activities in the management and provision of social services. This is a good example of combining teaching with applied research.

Accepting what Dr. Vazova aspires to in her "Self-Assessment of Scientific Contributions", I summarize and structure *her main scientific contributions* in the following two areas:

*First - upgrading the scientific knowledge* in the field of the competition - Social activities - social policies for the elderly and the aged people. Here I include:

- The proposed definitions of basic concepts: for "elderly", "aged people", "social services for the elderly and the aged", "profiled social services for the elderly and the aged", "unit for the provision of social services" "active life of the elderly and the aged", as well as the systematized basic characteristics of the categories "elderly", "aged people" (habilitation monography). I also refer here to the author's views on the concepts of "elderly people" and "aged people" (habilitation monography, publication 2).
- Conclusions on the need for clarity of definitions of the scientific categories used in the field of social work as a prerequisite for correct analyses, assessments, formation and implementation of adequate measures and programs within the policy cycle (habilitation monography).

*Second - scientific and applied contributions* such as:

- Based on an in-depth complex analysis, the evaluations of the quantitative and qualitative changes in the development of the long-term care sector (the book), as well as of the social services for the elderly and the elderly and their legal framework in the period 2002 - 2024, focusing on key reforms and challenges (the habilitation thesis; publications 2, 6, 17, 18, 20).
- Analyses and assessments of the (in)sufficiency in the provision of social services for the elderly and the elderly in the post-2002 period (habilitation monography).
- The recommendations developed on:
  - The development of active ageing policies (publications 2, 6, 12, 17, 20).
  - Improving the supply and provision of social services - expanding the capacity of units for the provision of social services for the elderly and the elderly, given the growing demand; optimizing financial resources and expanding the possibilities for financing social services; cooperation between the different sectors providing social services; key actions and initiatives aimed at improving the social services system in Bulgaria, including: investment in infrastructure, optimizing financial resources; development of software platforms for social services management (habilitation monography, publications 19, 20, 21)
- Proposed models for defining competencies for positions in the long-term care sector and their formation in the field of education, including models for distance learning of social workers through web-based platforms and artificial intelligence (publications 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

To summarize and complement my characterization of Dr. Vazova's teaching and research activities, I would like to note that I consider the presented *scientific publications and contributions* as a *personal/own achievements and a product of the candidate's research in accordance with the norm of scientific ethics according to the procedure regulated in the LDASRB and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU.*

### 3. Critical comments and recommendations

Recommendation:

- The definition of social services for the elderly and the elderly (on p. 15 in the monograph "Social Services for the Elderly and the Elderly in Bulgaria: Development, Challenges, Prospects"), could be enriched and refined by stating that these services are not so much a "complex of programs and measures", but above all, they are the result/non-material product of human labor/activity provided to the user and used by him at the moment of performing this labor.

### CONCLUSION

The documents and materials submitted by Dr. Tanya Vazova meet all the requirements of the LDASRB, the Regulations for the implementation of the LDASRB and the relevant Rules of the PU "Paisii Hilendarski".

The candidate has submitted a sufficient number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defense of the PhD. In the works submitted to the competition, there are own scientific and applied contributions that have received national and international publicity, a representative part of them being printed in monographs, in refereed journals with significant impact factor, in scientific collections and by academic publishers. The presented works have a scientific and practical character, some of them are directly oriented to the academic work at PU. The scientific and teaching qualification of prof. as. Dr. Tanya Vazova's academic and teaching qualifications are indisputable. The results she has achieved in teaching and in scientific research activities fully comply with the additional requirements of the Faculty of Education for participation in such competitions.

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After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works submitted for this competition, analysis of their significance and contributions contained in them, *I give my positive assessment and recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy for the election of the Chief Assistant Dr. Tanya Vazova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the PU "P. Hilendarski" in the professional field 3.4. Social Activities (Social Policies for the Elderly and the Aged People).*

14.04.2025

Signed: .....  
Prof. Georgi Shopov, PhD