

# OPINION

by **Associate Professor Dr. Nikolinka Aleksandrova Atanasova,**  
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on the materials submitted for participation in a competition  
for the academic position of Associate Professor  
at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv,  
in the field of higher education **1. Educational Sciences,**  
professional field **1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy)**

In the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette, Issue No. 96 of 11 November 2025, and on the official website of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv for the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, the candidate participating in the procedure is Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova from the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

## **1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Candidate**

### **Subject**

By Order No. RD-22-33 of 9 January 2026, issued by the Rector of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (PU), I was appointed as a member of the academic jury in the competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor** at the same university in the field of higher education 1. Educational Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy). The competition was announced to **meet the needs of the Department of Preschool Pedagogy** at the Faculty of Education.

**A single candidate has** submitted documents for participation in the announced competition:

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova, from the Department of Preschool Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Plovdiv.

The set of materials submitted in hard copy by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova complies with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv and includes the following documents:

- Application form addressed to the Rector for admission to the competition;
- Curriculum Vitae (European format);

- Diploma of higher education awarding the Master's degree, accompanied by a supplement (original and copy) or a notarized copy;
- Diploma for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) (original and copy) or a notarized copy;
- List of scientific publications;
- Scholarly works (copies of publications);
  - ✓ List of citations;
- Statements of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the additional faculty-specific requirements;
- Annotations of the submitted materials:
  - ✓ Annotations of materials under Article 65 of the Regulations of PU (PRASPU) in Bulgarian;
  - ✓ Annotations of materials under Article 65 of the Regulations of PU (PRASPU) in English;
- Self-assessment of contributions:
  - ✓ Self-assessment of contributions in Bulgarian;
  - ✓ Self-assessment of contributions in English;
- Declaration of originality and authenticity of the submitted documents;
- Certificate of employment (professional experience);
- Documents certifying teaching activity;
- Documents certifying research activity.

The candidate, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Angelova Kamenova, has submitted a total of 14 scholarly works, including: 1 monograph; 1 book published on the basis of a successfully defended doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD); 5 articles published in peer-reviewed and indexed journals in internationally recognized scientific databases; and 7 articles and conference papers published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes.

The submitted documentation does not include **textbooks or teaching aids**, as these are not required for this type of competition. It does, however, contain lists of publications used in previous procedures for the acquisition of the **educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD)** and for participation in a competition for the academic position of **Chief Assistant Professor**.

All publication lists comprise a total of **25 titles**, of which the above-mentioned **14 scholarly** works are relevant to the present competition. These have been accurately differentiated, are accepted for review, and are taken into account in the final evaluation. A total of 6 publications related to the doctoral dissertation and 5 publications from the previous competition for Chief Assistant Professor are not subject to review in the current procedure; however, they demonstrate the consistency of the candidate's publication activity, as well as previously awarded academic degrees and positions. There are no publications outside the scope of the competition's thematic field. The distribution of the scholarly works according to the indicator groups, in compliance with the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor, is as follows: **group A: Doctoral dissertation – 50 points; group B: Habilitation thesis – monograph (1) – 100 points; group C: Published book based on the defended doctoral dissertation – 75 points; Articles and conference papers published in peer-reviewed and indexed journals in internationally recognized scientific databases – 120 points; Articles and conference papers published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes – 70 points; Total for group C: 265 points** (minimum required: 200 points); **group D: Citations – 185 points** (minimum required: 50 points). Out of a required minimum **total of 400 points**, the candidate in the present competition for Associate Professor has submitted scholarly output amounting to a total of **600 points**. The application dossier also includes additional information related to **group E indicators: participation in national research or educational projects, with supporting evidence for the candidate's participation in one project, contributing 15 points**. Although not required for this type of competition, this further demonstrates the candidate's active and in-depth research engagement.

The reviewed documentation also demonstrates compliance with the additional faculty-specific requirements for the academic position.

No documents (such as official certificates) regarding participation in implemented projects, their practical benefits, or data on the economic impact are included, as these are not required for the current procedure.

No reduction of points or consideration for overlap in content or other reasons is necessary.

### ***Brief Biographical Data of the Candidate***

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova is an alumna of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, where she initially earned a Bachelor's degree in Preschool Pedagogy and English Language from the Faculty of Education. She subsequently obtained a Master's degree in

Methodology of Teaching English (Grades 1–12) from the Faculty of Philology at the same university.

In 2019, within the Faculty of Education, she successfully defended her doctoral dissertation entitled “*An Innovative Pedagogical Model for Foreign Language Acquisition in Preschool Age*”, conducted under the scientific supervision of Associate Professor Dr. Boryana Georgieva Ivanova, earning the degree of Doctor of Education.

Dr. Kamenova began her professional academic career at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in 2018 as an Assistant Lecturer in the Faculty of Education. In 2021, she was promoted to Chief Assistant Professor, and she currently holds a full-time teaching position. Her professional activity is entirely focused on preschool pedagogy.

Throughout her academic career,

Dr. Kamenova has taught numerous courses in both Bachelor’s and Master’s programs, including: *Foundations of Preschool Pedagogy, Preschool Pedagogy, Transition from Kindergarten to School, Early Childhood Psychology and Pedagogy, Preparation of the Child for School, Pedagogical Interaction in a Multicultural Environment, European Models of Preschool Education, and Innovations in Preschool Education*. She also supervises practical training for students, as well as semester and state examinations in both Bachelor’s and Master’s programs. To date, she has developed 10 curricula for Bachelor’s degree courses.

Her administrative activities include participation in accreditation committees, internal audits, and until 2025 she served as Coordinator of the Preschool Pedagogy and Preschool Pedagogy with Foreign Language programs. She is also a member of the Quality Management Committee for Educational Products at the Faculty of Education. Dr. Kamenova contributes to the Department for Qualification and Professional Development of Pedagogical Specialists at the university and, since 2023, serves as mentor of the “Young Educator” Club at the Faculty of Education.

Under her supervision, a total of 12 students have successfully defended their theses at both Bachelor’s and Master’s levels.

The biographical data of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova reveal a highly motivated, purpose-driven, and competent professional in the field of education, who has skillfully developed as a university scholar and educator with a clear focus on innovations in preschool pedagogy.

### ***Personal Impressions***

My personal impressions are based on professional interactions with Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova during her doctoral studies. She stands out as an exceptionally organized, meticulous, ethical, and consistent researcher and university educator. Dr. Kamenova possesses all the qualities of a successful leader, serving as a role model for behavior and professionalism among students, colleagues, preschool teachers, and other education professionals.

## **2. General Overview of the Candidate's Academic Activities**

### ***Assessment of Teaching and Pedagogical Work, Including Educational Materials, Lecture Courses, and Supervision of Students, Graduates, and Doctoral Candidates***

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Elena Kamenova maintains an average annual teaching load of 800–900 contact hours, significantly exceeding the required annual norm of 360 hours. She delivers compulsory, elective, and optional courses in both bachelor's and master's programs, for which she has developed comprehensive course curricula. The subjects she teaches focus on school readiness, child personal development, the educational process in preschool settings, play-based learning in early childhood, foreign language instruction in preschool, and the professional profile of the contemporary early childhood educator.

Dr. Kamenova provides skilled guidance and supervision to students, graduate students, and preschool teachers. She also organizes team-based supplementary activities within the “Young Educator” Club, aimed at enhancing the quality of training for students in pedagogical programs.

### ***Assessment of the Candidate's Scientific and Applied Research Activities***

As noted above, the candidate's scientific output has been grouped in accordance with the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor. The candidate has met the minimum required points across all indicator groups, with points in groups G and D exceeding the required minimum. The submission includes a habilitation work as well as a book based on the defended doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor.”

The articles submitted for the competition are organized into two groups. The first group includes publications in prestigious peer-reviewed journals indexed in internationally recognized databases. Of the five publications in this group, one is in a foreign language, one

is published in a Bulgarian journal, and one is approved for publication in the same journal, while two are included in the annual publication of a Bulgarian university. Two of these five publications are co-authored, and three are single-authored.

The second group consists of seven publications in non-indexed journals. All were authored individually. Of these, three appear in the annual publication of Plovdiv University, three in edited volumes of the Faculty of Education at Plovdiv University, and one in an electronic journal affiliated with Plovdiv University.

### ***Scientific, Applied, and Practical Contributions and Citations***

The three scientific areas differentiated by the candidate fully correspond to the announced competition. Within these areas, the candidate's contributions to both theory and practice are clearly specified. The highlighted scientific domains and the associated contributions are accepted as presented.

In each of the three areas, contributions of a theoretical-scientific, applied-scientific, and practical nature are evident. The candidate's scholarly output is valuable and recognized through active citations in numerous publications by established and early-career researchers. This provides indisputable evidence that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Kamenova is well-recognized within the academic community.

The citations are substantive, and the points associated with them significantly exceed the required minimum (185 points versus 50 required). Five of the citations appear in peer-reviewed journals indexed in internationally recognized databases, three in monographs and edited volumes with scientific peer review, and sixteen in non-indexed journals with scientific peer review. All citations refer to the period 2023–2025, following the candidate's appointment as Senior Assistant.

The contributions presented in the candidate's scholarly works are significant for both the theory and practice of preschool education.

The quantitative criteria for the academic position of "Associate Professor" have been fully met, as well as the specific requirements of the Faculty of Education at Plovdiv University.

The reviewed documentation provides indisputable evidence of the candidate's high-quality scholarly output in the present competition, which is further disseminated through numerous citations.

### ***Implementation Activities***

Through her contributions, the candidate in the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” has facilitated the implementation of new models, ideas, and solutions aimed at optimizing practice in preschool education.

### ***Assessment of the Candidate’s Personal Contribution***

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Kamenova has convincingly demonstrated her contribution to enriching existing knowledge in the field of preschool pedagogy and its innovative application in practice. In her scholarly work, she presents an original vision for transforming the kindergarten into a space that promotes more effective socialization and child development within a positive, innovative, and dynamic environment. The candidate’s contributions and the results achieved represent her professional and personal merit.

### **3. Critical Remarks and Recommendation**

I have no critical remarks. I recommend that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Kamenova continue to disseminate her scientific achievements and actively pursue the development and creation of innovative forms, methods, resources, and technologies aimed at optimizing pedagogical interaction in the kindergarten. Such efforts serve as a pathway for fostering creative, successful, and positive personalities.

### **Conclusion**

The documents and materials submitted by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Kamenova fully comply with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB, and the corresponding Regulations of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

The candidate has presented a sufficient number of scientific works published after those used for the defense of her doctoral degree and the successful completion of the competition for the academic position of “Assistant Professor.” Her works demonstrate original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, with a representative portion published in journals and scientific collections. Her theoretical developments are practically applicable and focused on optimizing educational and pedagogical activities in kindergarten. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Kamenova are beyond doubt.

The results achieved by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Kamenova in both her teaching and research activities fully meet the minimum national and additional requirements set by the Faculty of Education in accordance with the University Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB (a Compliance Report with the additional requirements for admission to the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at the Faculty of Education of Paisii Hilendarski University is on file).

After reviewing the materials and scientific works submitted for the competition, and based on an analysis of their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied, and applied contributions contained therein, I find it justified to give my positive evaluation and to recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education for the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Kamenova to the academic position of “Associate Professor” at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in the field of higher education 1. Educational Sciences, professional field 1.2. Pedagogy (Preschool Pedagogy).

05.03.2026

Plovdiv

Prepared by: .....  
(signature)

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nikolinka Atanasova**