

REVIEW

From: Prof. D.Sc. Jivko Ivanov Draganov, scientific specialty “European Union Law”, Department of International Law and EU Law, Law Faculty of the University of National and World Economy

Subject: competition, announced in State Gazette No. 96/11.11.2025, for the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.6. Law, scientific specialty "Constitutional Law" at the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”

1. Information about the competition

The competition is announced for the needs of the Law Faculty of the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”. I participate in the composition of the scientific jury of the competition in accordance to Order № 136/19.12.2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”.

2. Information about the candidates in the competition

The only candidate in the announced competition is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Yordanov Paunov. Hristo Paunov graduated in law from the Faculty of Law of the Paisii Hilendarski University in 1998, and since 2024 he holds a master's degree in „Public administration” from the same university. In 2013, the candidate obtained the degree "Doctor of Law" from the Institute for the State and the Law at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Assoc. Prof. Hristo Paunov has many years of teaching and research experience.

His academic career began in 1999, when he entered the Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University, where he continues to work to this day. Along with his teaching and research activities, Assoc. Prof. Hristo Paunov has also held a number of administrative and management positions, including Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Law, Head of the Master's Program "Public Administration", he was the Scientific Secretary of the Faculty of Law, a member of the editorial board of the journal *Studia Iuris*, etc.

From 2020 to the present, Assoc. Prof. Hristo Paunov holds the position of Ombudsman of the University of Law "Paisiy Hilendarski". Along with his academic achievements, the candidate's activities include active public engagement. Hristo Paunov is a prominent figure of the Bulgarian Red Cross, was the Chairman of the Bulgarian Youth Red Cross, a long-standing member of the National Council of the Bulgarian Red Cross, a member of the National Ethical Commission on Transplantation, etc.

3. Fulfilment of the requirements for holding the academic position

The only candidate in the announced competition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Paunov, has submitted a Reference for compliance with the minimum national requirements, which establishes the following fulfilment on the individual indicators. In Group A - 50 points with a minimum number of 50. In Group B - 100 points with a minimum number of 100. In Group G - 130 points with a minimum number for the professional field Law of 100. In Group D - 185 points with a minimum number of 100. In Group E - 143 points with a minimum number of 100, or a total of 608 points with a minimum number for the professional field Law of 450 points, which represents a significant excess of the minimum required number of points according to the national requirements.

4. Teaching and participation in projects

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Paunov has many years of teaching experience. He has given lectures on the subjects "Constitutional Law", "Parliamentary Law", "Legislation" and "Electoral Law", and conducted seminar classes on the subject "Constitutional Law" before students in full-time and part-time study at the Faculty of Law of the "Paisii Hilendarski" University of Plovdiv. The candidate's total teaching experience exceeds 26 years, and for over 9 years he has held the academic position of "associate professor". Assoc. Prof. Paunov's teaching experience is entirely within the scope of the scientific specialty of the announced competition. The candidate in the competition has participated in university and international scientific projects, namely 3 projects funded by the research fund of the Paisii Hilendarski University, one project under the HORIZON 2020 program and one project under the Erasmus + program.

5. General characteristics and contributions of the presented scientific papers

The publications with which the candidate participates in the competition include the habilitation work "Representative Democracy and Digitalization" and 13 articles and reports published in collections of materials from scientific conferences in the country. All submitted publications fall within the scope of the announced competition and have not been used by the candidate to participate in other competitions for holding academic positions or for acquiring scientific degrees.

5.1. General characteristics and contributions of the candidate's habilitation work

The habilitation work "Representative Democracy and Digitalization" is an original and up-to-date scientific study dedicated to the issues about the influence of the development of the technologies and, in particular, the digitalization of society relations on the functioning of representative democracy and on the established constitutional order. The thesis is 254 pages long. Its content comprises of an introduction, eight chapters and a conclusion. The author analyzes representative democracy in the contemporary constitutional order and digitalization as a social and legal phenomenon and, on this basis, conducts an in-depth study of the consequences of digitalization in relation to the electoral process and parliamentary activity, as well as the processes of digitalization of the executive and judicial branches. Attention is paid to the concept of digital rights and freedoms and to the analysis of the opportunities for civic participation that digital technologies provide.

The work has many merits and is undoubtedly of a contributing nature. The monograph is the first scientific study in our country, dedicated to the consequences that the rise of digital technologies has on the functioning and development of the constitutional foundations of the modern legal order. The study includes a comprehensive and detailed analysis of these processes and allows the identification of the most significant problems, challenges and prospects facing constitutional law today. This is facilitated by the holistic approach and by the study of digitalization as a social phenomenon, which requires the adaptation of democratic institutions and processes to it.

Among the contributions, the analysis of the concept of "digital constitutionalism" should be highlighted. Clarifying the aforementioned concept is particularly important for the subsequent assessment of the impact of digitalization on established constitutional principles and for the comprehensive study of the processes of digitalization of the legislative,

executive and judicial branches. In this way, the author manages, on the one hand, to reveal general trends, and on the other hand, to deduce the specific problems of digitalization of the activities of the three branches. Contribution to the development of scientific research in the field of constitutional law is the substantiation of the thesis for the formation of a new generation of rights, namely digital rights and freedoms and the study of digital forms of citizen participation as means of expanding and enriching the existing instruments for participation and development of representative democracy. The contributions of applied significance include the candidate's proposals for improving the regulatory framework, the identification of the main obstacles to achieving a higher degree of digitalization of the executive and judicial branches, and the analysis of the regulation of machine voting.

Along with the scientific and applied contributions, the habilitation work will be useful in the training of lawyers and in the development of lecture courses and the preparation of students and doctoral candidates.

5.2. General characteristics and contributions of the candidate's other publications

For his participation in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Paunov has submitted a total of 13 scientific publications. They are articles in established and authoritative specialized legal journals and conference reports included in peer-reviewed collections. All publications submitted by the candidate contain contributions.

The following can be outlined among the contributions of the presented publications:

1. the in-depth analysis and reveal of the content and guarantees for the protection of basic constitutional principles, such as the principle of freedom of economic initiative, in: "Free economic initiative as a constitutional principle", Collection of reports from a scientific conference, UNWE, 2020;
2. the argumentation of the need to expand the scope of constitutional protection of children in: "Minors in Bulgarian constitutional norms", *Studia Iuris* magazine, 2024, No. 2;
3. the research on the problems of the structure and functioning of the system of state authorities in the article "On the change in the form of state governance of the Republic of Bulgaria", in the collection "Law in the XXI century, challenges and perspectives", 2023;
4. the proposals for the procedure for amending the Constitution in the report "Legal Challenges in the Adoption of Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria", in the collection "Challenges to Legal Regulation in Bulgaria", 2024, etc.

6. Recommendations

The candidate's academic work in the future could be enriched by the creation of specialized study literature. This would contribute to supporting the preparation of students and doctoral candidates in the field of constitutional law.

7. Conclusion

The candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristo Yordanov Paunov meets all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and of the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB and should receive a positive evaluation. I consider that Assoc. prof. Dr. Hristo Paunov possesses all the necessary qualities, research and teaching experience, to hold the academic position of "professor" and I confidently recommend to the scientific jury to adopt a decision to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", Assoc. prof. Dr. Hristo Paunov to be elected to the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.6. Law, scientific specialty "Constitutional law".

09.02.2026

Prof. Dr.Sc. Jivko Draganov