

To

Members of the scientific jury, established by Order № MA-22-43 of 09.01.2026 of the Rector of the Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski” (PU) concerning competition for occupying the academic position “professor” in area of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”, professional direction 3.6. “Law”, scientific speciality “Constitutional Law”

REVIEW

of Prof. DSc. Georgi Penchev – Faculty of Law at the Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski” concerning competition for occupying the academic position “professor” in area of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”, professional direction 3.6. “Law”, scientific speciality “Constitutional Law” in PU, announced for the needs of Department “Public Law Sciences” of the Faculty of Law (FL) at PU

Dear members of the scientific jury,

I participate in membership of the scientific jury under Order No. MA-22-43 of 09.01.2026 of the Rector of PU. I present to you my opinion, prepared on the ground of Art. 29a of the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA – SG, No. 38 of 2010, as amended), Art. 61 of the Regulation for Implementation of the DARSBA, adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 202 of September 10, 2010 (RIDASRBA – SG, No. 75 of 2010, as amended) and Art. 79, par. 1- 3 of the Regulation for Development of the Academic Staff of the Plovdiv University (RDASPU – In: ПЛОВДИВСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „ПАИСИЙ ХИЛЕНДАРСКИ” [online] [viewed 20.01.2026]. Available from: https://uni-plovdiv.bg/uploads/site/pravilnici/PRASPU_29.09.2025_r..pdf).

1. General presentation of the procedure and received materials

The competition on the occupying an academic position “professor” of the PU in area of higher education 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”, professional field 3.6. “Law”, scientific speciality “Constitutional Law” for the needs of Department “Public Law Sciences” of the FL at the PU has been announced in SG, No. 96 of 11.11.2025 and in the Internet page of the PU. For attendance in the competition there are presented documents on time by one candidate - Assoc. Prof. PhD Hristo Yordanov Paunov from Department “Public Law Sciences” of FL at the PU. The candidate has presented a complete of materials and document in paper and electronic form under Art. 77 of RDASPU. He meets the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the DASRBA and Art. 1a, para. 1 of the RIDASRBA for his admission to

participate in the competition. It has been followed a procedure under Art. 78 with connection of Art. 67 of RDASPU.

Assoc. Prof. PhD H. Paunov submitted for the competition 14 scientific publications after obtaining an academic position “Associate Professor”, namely: a) one monograph “Representative Democracy and Digitalization”, Plovdiv: Plovdiv University Press, 2025, 256 p., in its capacity as a habilitation work; b) 13 scientific articles, as follows: The capital of Bulgaria as a state symbol. – In: Law: traditions and perspectives. Sofia: Ciela, 2018, pp. 376-384; Constitutional dimensions of Bulgarian cultural identity. – In: Law and Cultural Values. Sofia: ISL-BAS, 2019, pp. 222-236; 140 years since the creation of the Tarnovo Constitution. – In: Collection of scientific readings dedicated to the 140th anniversary of the adoption of the Tarnovo Constitution. Sofia: Ciela, 2019, pp. 31-37; Free economic initiative as a constitutional principle. – In: Tradition and Development of Legislation in the Field of Economics. Sofia: PH-UNWE, 2020, pp. 89-95; The technology for constitutional changes in the Bulgarian constitutions of 1947 and 1971 – Business and Law. Sofia, 2021, No. 4, pp. 5-14; The Grand National Assembly as guarantor of the protection of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. – Studia Iuris. Plovdiv, 2021, No. 2, pp. 75-82; On the need for the institution of a "university ombudsman" in Bulgaria. – In: 100 Years of UNWE – 100 Years of Law at UNWE. Vol. II. Sofia: PH-UNWE, 2021, pp. 46-53; On constitutional law as a science and academic discipline in the Faculty of Law at the Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski." – Studia Iuris. Plovdiv, 2022, No. 2, pp. 79-89; Public law aspects in the regulation of the state monopoly under Article 18, paragraph 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. – In: Legal, economic and historical aspects of state management of economic activity. Sofia: PH-UNWE, 2023, pp. 85–92; On the change in the form of state government of the Republic of Bulgaria. – In: Law in the 21st Century – Challenges and Prospects. Vol. 2. Plovdiv: Paisii Hilendarski University Press, 2023, pp. 35–43; Legal challenges in adopting amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. – In: Challenges to legal regulation in Bulgaria. Sofia: PH-UNWE, 2024, pp. 41-54; The Minors and juveniles in Bulgarian constitutional law. – Studia Iuris. Plovdiv, 2024, No. 2, pp. 7-16.

All presented scientific publications for attendance in the competition are in the field of the Constitutional Law.

2. Brief biographical data of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Hristo Paunov graduated with a degree in law from the FL at the PU in 1998. In 1999, after successfully passing a competitive examination, he was appointed as a full-time assistant professor of Constitutional Law in the FL at the PU, Department of “Public Law Sciences”. In 2013, he obtained his doctoral degree after successfully defending his dissertation on “Revision of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. Substantive and Procedural Aspects” in the Institute of Legal Sciences at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Since 2006, he has been a main assistant, and since 2016, he has been an associate

professor in the Department of Public Law in the FL of the PU. From 2017 to 2019, Assoc. Prof. H. Paunov was Deputy Dean of the FL at the PU, and since 2020 he has been Ombudsman of the PU. From 2014 to 2020, he was a member of the editorial board of the specialized online legal journal “Studia Iuris” in the FL at the PU, while also participating in a number of national and international conferences, training courses, and specializations in Bulgaria and abroad. In addition, Assoc. Prof. H. Paunov is the author of a number of scientific publications and articles in periodicals.

3. General characteristics of the activity of the candidate

3.1. Assessment of the educational-pedagogical activity

Assoc. Prof. Hristo Paunov participates actively in the educational and pedagogical activities of the FL at the PU. He has taught educational disciplines “Constitutional Law”, “Parliamentary Law”, “Elective Law”, “Constitutional Foundations of Public Administration”, “Constitutional Foundations of International Relations”, “Lawmaking”, “Senior government administration”, “Medical Law”, “Ombudsman, citizens’ suggestions and complaints” and “The Ombudsman in a United Europe”. At the same time, he faithfully fulfills his duties as a lecturer in the above-mentioned disciplines.

3.2. Assessment of the scientific and scientific-applied activity

The monograph “Representative Democracy and Digitization” presented as a habilitation work, is the first comprehensive scientific study in Bulgaria on the legal regime of digitization of democratic institutions and processes. It has scientific and practical significance, as it can be used not only by lawyers but also by practitioners in other fields. The above-mentioned articles are of scientific, theoretical, and practical importance for the analysis of specific constitutional and legal issues.

3.3. Assessment of scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the presented for participation in competition scientific production of the candidate

3.3.1. Evaluation of the scientific and scientific applied contributions of the monograph “Representative Democracy and Digitization”, presented as a habilitation work

In terms of structure, this monograph is divided into: an introduction (pp. 11-20); three parts, which are divided into eight chapters, titled as follows: Part One, “Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Framework” (pp. 21-74), which includes Chapter One, “Representative Democracy in the Contemporary Constitutional Order” (pp. 23-50), and Chapter Two “Digitization as a Social and Legal Phenomenon” (pp. 51-74); Part Two “Digitization of Democratic Institutions and Processes” (pp. 75-188), which includes Chapter Three “Digitization of the Electoral Process” (pp. 77-108), Chapter Four “Digitization of Parliamentary Activity” (pp. 109-132), Chapter Five “Digitization of the Executive Power” (pp. 133-164) and Chapter Six “Digitization of the Judicial Power” (pp. 165-188); Part Three “Constitutional Challenges and Prospects” (pp. 189-238), which includes Chapter Seven “Digital Rights, Freedoms, and

Obligations” (pp. 191-214) and Chapter Eight “Digital Forms of Civic Participation” (pp. 215-238); Conclusion (pp. 239-249) and Bibliography (pp. 251-255), including 36 titles in Cyrillic and 28 in Latin.

The following scientific and applied scientific contributions of the above-mentioned monograph can be summarized:

1) author’s opinion of direct democracy as the most sustainable form of democratic governance, capable of adapting to changing conditions in society (p. 27 and p. 50);

2) very good analysis of contemporary challenges to representative democracy, e.g. globalisation, digitalisation and the complexity of certain societal issues requiring expert opinion in their resolution (pp. 35-40);

3) author’s opinion on the need to rethink traditional forms of representation and to experiment with new mechanisms of democratic participation in governance and control in relation to contemporary challenges to representative democracy (p. 40);

4) a successful analysis of the causes and factors of the crisis of legitimacy and public trust in representative institutions (pp. 42-46), combined with the identification of ways to overcome it (pp. 47-48);

5) author’s opinion on digitalization as a use of digital technology in public life (p. 51) and as a challenge to constitutional law (p. 74);

6) author’s opinion on the challenges of e-voting to the constitutional principles of suffrage (p. 82);

7) in the conclusion (pp. 239-249), a number of useful conclusions for legal science from the considered legal framework and recommendations for its improvement are made.

3.3.2. Evaluation of the scientific and scientific applied contributions of the articles, submitted for participation in the competition

In summary, it can be pointed out that the scientific articles submitted by the candidate in the competition have a contributing scientific theoretical and practical significance for the analysis of individual constitutional law problems.

4. Assessment of the personal contribution of the candidate

The above mentioned contributions in the scientific production and the results obtained are the personal merit of Assoc. Prof. PhD Hristo Paunov. They are conditioned by the many years of conscientious and systematic exercised teaching and scientific activity in the FL at the PU.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

Some critical remarks and recommendations can be made to the monograph “Representative Democracy and Digitization”, mainly of an editorial nature.

5.1. Critical remarks

1) On p. 62 it is appropriate to footnote the number and year of publication in the Official Journal of the European Union, L series of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal

data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), namely - OJ L 119, 04.05.2016, in force from 24.05.2016, with applicability from 25.05.2018.

2) on p. 170 in the title of paragraph 3 of Chapter Six, after the words "Constitutional aspects" it is necessary to add the words "of electronic justice" before the words "in Bulgarian law".

3) On p. 226, p. 26, the number "22" should be replaced by the number "2".

5.2. Recommendations

The "Summaries and Conclusions" sections appearing at the end of chapters three (pp. 106-108), four (pp. 131-132), five (pp. 162-164), six (pp. 186-188), seven (pp. 213-214), and eight (pp. 236-238) could have been edited more synthesized only in the conclusion of the monograph and accordingly do not appear in the above chapters.

However, these critical remarks and recommendations do not belittle the high, in my opinion, significance and usefulness for the legal theory and practice of the above monograph of the candidate in the competition.

6. Personal impressions from the candidate

My personal impressions from Assoc. Prof. PhD Hristo Paunov are very good. To his colleagues he seek to be polite and careful.

Conclusion

Based on the above:

1. In conclusion I declare that Assoc. Prof. PhD Hristo Yordanov Paunov meets the requirements of Art. 29, par. 1 and Art. 29b, par. 1 and 2 of DASRBA, Art. 60, par. 1 of RIDASRBA, and Art. 74, par. 1, Art. 76, par. 1 and 2 and Art. 77 of RDASPU for election of the academic position "professor" in area of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.6. "Law", scientific speciality "Constitutional Law".

2. I give, on the ground of Art. 29b, par. 2 of DASRBA, Art. 61, par. 1 of RIDASRBA and Art. 80 of RDASPU, a positive assessment of the scientific and teaching activities of Assoc. Prof. PhD Hristo Paunov which motivates me to a positive conclusion about his holding of the academic position "professor".

3. I suggest to the Scientific Jury, on the ground of Art. 29b, par. 2 in connection with Art. 27a, par. 1 of DASRBA, Art. 61, par. 1 of RIDASRBA and Art. 80, par. 1 and Art. 81, par. 1 in connection with Art. 70, par. 1 of RDASPU, to prepare a report to the Faculty Council of the FL at rhe PU with proposal for Assoc. Prof. PhD HristoYordanov Paunov to be elected for the academic position "professor" in area of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.6. "Law", scientific speciality "Constitutional Law".

Sofia, 22.01.2026.

Signature:

(Prof. DSc. Georgi Penchev)