

STATEMENT

by **Prof. Dr.Sc. Maria Antonova Schnitter, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"**,

(name, surname, first name - academic degree in a higher education institution or scientific organization)

regarding the materials submitted for participation in a procedure for awarding

the title of "**Associate Professor**"

at **Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"**

in the field of higher education 2. Humanities

professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology

New Testament

In the procedure for "Associate Professor," announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 from November 11, 2025, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of *Theology* within the Faculty of Philosophy and History, as the sole candidate participating is Chief Assistant Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, from the same Department.

With Order RD-22-36/January 9, 2026, I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury for the procedure, and in accordance with the decision of the SJ (Protocol No. 1/January 16-19, 2026), I am providing you with the following opinion:

1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Candidate

I have known Dr. Kovacheva since 2012, when she started working as an adjunct lecturer, later as a full-time assistant, and since 2020 as a senior assistant in the Department of Theology, which I headed at the time. Her inclusion played an important role in strengthening the department's staff and contributed to its rejuvenation. Her solid theological training in Sofia and Marburg, combined with her indisputable teaching skills, enabled Dr. Kovacheva to quickly become an indispensable part of the group of Plovdiv theologians. Her habilitation is timely and necessary for the future development of PF 2.4. at Plovdiv University.

The set of materials presented by the candidate in paper and electronic form is in full compliance with the Higher Education Act, the Research and Academic Staff Development Act, the PU

Research and Academic Staff Development Regulations, and the minimum national requirements. It includes an impressive number of 58 publications, most of which were published after the candidate assumed the position of senior assistant: 1 monograph, 10 studies (seven of which reflect participation with reports at scientific conferences in Bulgaria) and 47 articles, one of which is reflected in WoS, 21 are in collections from scientific conferences, and 21 are in the periodical publication of the Department of Theology, *Thought, Word, Text*. Only 4 of the publications are abroad – three of them in Russia and one in Italy. She also reports participation in a total of 33 scientific forums, half of which are international; however, only a small part of them are held abroad and provide opportunities for real international scientific exchange. On the one hand, these data demonstrate Dr. Kovacheva's commendable scientific productivity, significantly exceeding the minimum national requirements for the position of "associate professor." On the other hand, it seems that she rarely "steps out of her comfort zone," i.e., only a small portion of her scientific works have been published in authoritative and "visible" specialized periodicals.

2. General description of the candidate's activities

Assessment of the candidate's teaching and pedagogical activities and preparation

Dr. Kovacheva teaches a total of eight lecture courses. She is solely responsible for teaching the basic biblical disciplines: *Introduction and Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament, Book of Acts of the Holy Apostles, Early Christianity*, as well as several specialized master's courses. She works with students in a dedicated and fair manner and has many graduates who have achieved good results. With a view to the successful accreditation of PF 2.4. after the end of the current procedure, I would recommend a revision of the curriculum for the bachelor's degree program. With a view to the more successful accreditation of PF 2.4. after the end of the current procedure, I would recommend a correction to the curriculum of the bachelor's degree program so that lectures, rather than seminars, are the leading and predominant form of instruction in these core disciplines.

I would like to note the enormous organizational and editorial work done by the candidate in connection with the organization of scientific forums and the preparation for the publication of a series of periodicals in the scientific field of the competition and in theology in general. This activity demonstrates the growth and maturation of a reliable young scholar who will continue to

support the sustainable development of the department and the specialty at Plovdiv University in the future.

Assessment of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific activity

First and foremost, mention should be made of the monographic habilitation thesis "*The Carnal, 'Soulful,' and 'Spiritual' Christians According to the Epistles of the Holy Apostles in the Context of the Theme of the Union of the Soul with God.*" (Plovdiv: Paisii Hilendarski University Press, 2025), which summarizes the results of Eva Kovacheva's work in this thematic area over the last decade. The work is a testament to an in-depth and mature research perspective, contains original ideas and conclusions, and impresses with the wealth of competently used primary and secondary literature in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, Russian, Bulgarian, English, and French. Of course, in my role as a scientific reviewer of the book, I noticed the inappropriate use of the masculine singular in the text ("the author discovers..."), but it seems that the author has chosen to justify her claim to "masculine intellect" in this way, which is unusual for Bulgarian readers.

The majority of Eva Kovacheva's scientific publications are in the thematic area of the competition and interpret New Testament issues. Published in Plovdiv editions, they are also useful reading for students and enrich the materials for their preparation with fresh and interesting contributions. In the context of the Orthodox biblical tradition, the candidate's sustained interest in the topic of women's presence in New Testament literature (pub. 2.3, 2.9, 3.32, 3.34, 3.37, 3:39, 3.45 from the attached list), and from the point of view of exegesis, the numerous works (a total of 16 studies and articles, as well as a chapter in the monographic work) devoted to the allegorical method of interpretation in the Holy Fathers are extremely useful. Personally, I find Dr. Kovacheva's contributions most interesting in her works on newly discovered or little-known sources (New Testament pseudepigrapha), which demonstrate her training as a textual scholar and translator at some of the most prestigious European research centers. It is regrettable that these original scientific results have not been published in internationally visible periodicals.

Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution

The scientific works submitted for review are undoubtedly original and independently created by Dr. Kovacheva.

It is noteworthy that most of the citations of the candidate's scientific works are from abroad and reflect the scientific reception of her dissertation, published in German. This proves once again that the desired representativeness of our scientific results can be stimulated precisely by stepping out of the comfort zone of our native language and the close circle of our closest colleagues – a step that should be easy for Eva Kovacheva to take.

3. Critical remarks and recommendations

My only recommendation for the future scientific and academic development of Dr. E. Kovacheva, as has already become clear, is related to the need for greater publicity for her research work. As I have already mentioned, she is one of the most convincing "Plovdiv" voices in our theological science, but this raises the question of her "audibility." I am convinced that Eva Kovacheva's scientific results would find interested readers not only in the current national context, but also in the much broader international environment of modern theology. In this sense, I recommend that she focus on more authoritative foreign-language periodicals, especially abroad.

CONCLUSION

The only candidate in the competition, Dr. Kovacheva, has presented a significant number of scientific papers published after the materials used in her doctoral thesis defense, which contain original scientific contributions and have received recognition from her colleagues. Eva Kovacheva's scientific, teaching, and administrative qualifications are beyond doubt.

After reviewing the materials and scientific papers submitted in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific contributions they contain, I find it reasonable to give my **positive assessment** and recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Eva Krasteva Kovacheva to the academic position of 'associate professor' in the scientific specialty *New Testament*, PF 2.4. Religion and Theology, 2. Humanities.

25.02.2026

Prepared by:

(signature)

Prof. Dr.Sc. Maria Antonova Schnitter