

## STATEMENT

by **Assoc. Prof. Borislava Petkova Kostova, PhD,**  
**Associate Professor at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”**  
regarding the materials submitted for participation in a competition  
for the academic position of “**Associate Professor**”

at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”,

in: Higher Education Area 2. Humanities; Professional Field 2.4. Religion and Theology;  
Scientific Specialty: New Testament

The competition for the position of “Associate Professor” was announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 of November 11, 2025, and on the website of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” for the needs of the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History. The sole candidate is Chief Assistant Professor Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, PhD, from the Department of Theology.

**1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the Candidate** By Order No. RD-22-36 of January 9, 2026, of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury in a competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” at PU in Higher Education Area 2. Humanities; Professional Field 2.4. Religion and Theology (Scientific Specialty: New Testament), announced for the needs of the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History.

For participation in the announced competition, documents were submitted by a single candidate – Chief Assistant Professor Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, PhD, from the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and History of PU. The set of materials presented by Dr. Kovacheva in hard copy is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU.

The candidate has submitted a total of 66 scientific works, including 2 monographs, 13 studies, and 51 articles. A total of 58 scientific works are accepted for review, which are outside the dissertation and are taken into account for the final evaluation. Seven scientific works related to the dissertation and the competition for the position of “Chief Assistant Professor,” and one scientific work outside the scope of the competition, are not subject to review.

In quantitative terms, Dr. Kovacheva’s scientific output is impressive. It significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements, realizing 1,000 points against the required 400. This substantial excess (2.5 times above the standard) is evidence of the candidate’s exceptional scientific intensity and maturity.

**Brief Biographical Data of the Candidate** Chief Assistant Professor Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, PhD, graduated from a language high school in Pazardzhik with two Western languages. She obtained her higher education at the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University in the period 1998–2003. In 2011, she acquired the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” (PhD) at Philipps-University Marburg, Germany, and her professional path at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” began in 2012 as a part-time assistant, transitioned through the position of “Assistant Professor” (2013–2020), and has continued as Chief Assistant Professor from 2020 to the present. Her academic

activity is closely related to teaching disciplines in field 2.4. Religion and Theology, while simultaneously developing impressive scientific and organizational activities.

**Personal Impressions** I have known Dr. Eva Kovacheva professionally for several years, and during this period, I have observed her academic development, which is characterized by exceptional consistency, depth, and dedication to theological science. Over the years, she has established herself as an extremely organized and responsible colleague who combines the analytical mind of a researcher with exceptional precision (in the German manner) in performing every task, regardless of its scale or complexity. The combination of her high professionalism and her gentle character makes her a highly respected colleague and teacher.

**2. General Characteristics of the Candidate's Activity** Dr. Kovacheva's scientific output is impressive in volume and narrowly profiled in the field of the New Testament and Biblical Theology, being directly relevant to professional field 2.4. Religion and Theology. In her texts, Dr. Kovacheva demonstrates scientific maturity, profound analytical skills, and methodological precision.

**2.1. Monographic Work** A central place in the submitted materials is occupied by the monograph "*The 'Carnal,' 'Soulish,' and 'Spiritual' Christians according to the Epistles of the Holy Apostles in the Context of the Theme of the Soul's Union with God*" (2025). The work is the fruit of many years of research and demonstrates maturity in the application of the historical-critical and exegetical methods. The author makes an original contribution to Bulgarian Biblical Studies by defining the three anthropological categories (*σαρκικοί, ψυχικοί, πνευματικοί*) not simply as theoretical concepts, but in the context of the dynamic process of deification (*theosis*). The work fills an important niche in Bulgarian Biblical Studies, offering a systematic view of New Testament anthropology. The research is supported by a massive reference apparatus, including sources in eight languages, which testifies to Dr. Kovacheva's high linguistic and scientific preparation.

**2.2. Scientific-Theoretical and Applied Contributions** Based on the presented studies and articles, Dr. Kovacheva's contributions can be defined in several key areas, with an emphasis on:

**A) New Testament Exegesis and Eschatology.** The candidate shows a marked interest in the interpretation of complex biblical concepts. In her research, she clarifies the spiritual parameters of the "Heavenly Holy of Holies" (Study 2.2) and makes a precise distinction between the concepts of "Paradise" and the "Kingdom of God" (Study 2.1). A significant contribution is the study of the eschatological transformation of creation (Study 2.4) and the role of Christ as the victor over death (Article 3.5). These studies show the author's ability to move from the literal meaning of the text to its deep spiritual and dogmatic content.

**B) Biblical Anthropology.** In this direction, Dr. Kovacheva develops the thesis of mystical union with Christ as the center of Christian life. She analyzes the position of St. Apostle Paul (Article 3.2); offers a new reading of the image of St. Mary Magdalene (Study 2.3) also through apocryphal texts (Article 3.34). Research on virtues in Christ (Article 3.14), the union of the soul with Christ (Article 3.24), and the mystical connection with Christ (Article 3.19) contributes to a deeper understanding of New Testament revelation.

**C) Interdisciplinarity and Culturological Aspects.** One of the merits of Dr. Kovacheva's work is the innovative biblical analysis of Christian symbolism in Bulgarian National Revival art, specifically regarding the composition "The Wheel of Life" (Study 2.5, Article 3.15). She also explores the spiritual and educational aspects in the work of St. Paisii Hilendarski, analyzing history as a field of Divine Providence (Articles 3.16, 3.46). This approach establishes theology as a science capable of interpreting elements of cultural heritage.

**D) Linguistic and Terminological Contributions.** The work on specific toponymy, ecclesionymy, and linguonymy in the context of Christian communities (Article 3.47) shows exceptional attention to linguistic details that often carry deep theological content.

**E) Female Images and the Theme of Female Presence in the New Testament.** Special emphasis must be placed on Dr. Kovacheva's sustained interest in researching the image of women in various biblical, anthropological, and social hypostases – in a total of 2 studies (2.3, 2.9) and 5 articles (3.32, 3.34, 3.37, 3.39, 3.45). This focus runs like a "red thread" through Dr. Kovacheva's entire scientific output, analyzed at several levels. The woman is presented as an active participant in sacred history and the first witness to New Testament events. Through the image of Mary Magdalene, the model of spiritual growth from repentance to contemplation of God is derived, affirming the equality of the female nature on the path to deification. Emphasis is placed on the ministry and dignity of women in the early Christian community; her role in catechesis and the family as a "domestic church" is highlighted. Last but not least, some aspects of the visual and symbolic presence of female holiness in the Bulgarian church tradition and art are studied. Such an integrated approach allows Dr. Kovacheva to present the woman not just as a historical figure, but as a spiritual subject of key importance for the life of the Church.

**2.3. Citations and Recognition** The high quality of the scientific research is evidenced by citations in prestigious Bulgarian and international publications. The presented list of 135 points (against a required 50) confirms that Dr. Kovacheva's works are actively used by her colleagues. Especially valuable are the citations in prestigious international databases such as Web of Science and Scopus, which legitimizes the relevance of her research on a global scale.

**2.4. Pedagogical, Scientific, and Organizational Activity** The overall characteristics of Dr. Kovacheva's activity include extensive pedagogical, scientific, and organizational work, which is directly related to strengthening the authority of the Department of Theology and Plovdiv University. Her teaching load is impressive (a total of 135 hours of lectures per year). She is the titular of fundamental courses such as "Introduction to the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament" and "Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament," which is a direct reflection of her expertise.

Dr. Kovacheva is the compiler and editor of 25 scientific collections (something unprecedented for a candidate for the position of "Associate Professor") in the field of theology and humanities, which is an indicator of her exceptional ability to structure collective scientific knowledge. The organization of 11 scientific conferences and participation in over 33 national and international

forums (in cities such as Vienna, Perugia, Belgrade) testify to Dr. Kovacheva's active position in international scientific exchange.

The scientific production presented for the competition is entirely the independent work of Dr. Kovacheva, and the formulated scientific-theoretical and applied contributions are her personal merit and reflect her long-term systematic research in the narrowly specialized field of New Testament exegesis and anthropology. She demonstrates the ability to fully independently construct complex scientific theses. Through precise analysis of biblical texts and a critical review of a vast volume of foreign language literature, innovative interpretative models are offered that build upon existing knowledge in Bulgarian Biblical Studies. The results obtained in the monographic study and the numerous studies and articles convincingly prove that the candidate possesses the capacity to independently define research problems and solve them with a high degree of scientific reliability, making her contributions fully recognizable and original.

**3. Critical Remarks and Recommendations** No methodological or factual gaps are found in the presented materials. My only recommendation is that in the future, Dr. Kovacheva should combine parts of her numerous articles on specific apostolic epistles into independent textbooks or commentaries, which would be extremely useful for theology students at PU.

**Conclusion** The documents and materials presented by Chief Assistant Professor Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, PhD, meet all the requirements of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Application of ZRASRB, and the corresponding Regulations of PU "Paisii Hilendarski." The candidate in the competition has presented a significant number of scientific works published after the materials used in the defense of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) and in the competition for the position of "Chief Assistant Professor." In the candidate's works, there are original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, as a representative part of them have been published in journals and scientific collections issued by international academic publishing houses.

The scientific and teaching qualifications of Dr. Kovacheva are beyond doubt. The results achieved by Dr. Kovacheva in teaching and research activities fully comply with the minimum national requirements adopted in connection with the PU Regulations for the application of ZRASRB.

After familiarizing myself with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition and considering the analysis of their significance and the scientific contributions contained therein, I find it justified to give my **positive assessment** and confidently recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a proposal report to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of Chief Assistant Professor Eva Krasteva Kovacheva, PhD, to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at PU "Paisii Hilendarski" in: Higher Education Area 2. Humanities; Professional Field 2.4. Religion and Theology; Scientific Specialty: New Testament.

Date: 25.02.2026

Prepared the Statement: .....

Assoc. Prof. Borislava Kostova, PhD