

REPORT

Competition for the academic position of PROFESSOR,
1.1. Theory and Management of Education (Higher Education Management),
announced by the New Bulgarian University at 19.05.2023,
with Candidate Assoc. Prof. Elena Blagoeva, PhD

Member of the scientific jury: Assoc. Prof. Vencislav Dzhambazov, PhD, New Bulgarian University

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

In the competition for Professor of Theory and Management of Education for the needs of the NBU, documents were submitted by only one candidate - Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva, PhD, full-time teacher at the NBU, head of the "Pedagogy" section at the "Foreign Languages and Cultures" Department of NBU. The procedure has been launched according to the current legislation in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations of the NBU.

The candidate has submitted all the required documents and evidentiary materials, from which it is evident that the minimum national requirements for research and teaching activities are fulfilled for the Higher Education Area 1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Direction 1.1 Theory and Management of Education (Higher Education Management) . The main monographic work on the competition is indicated - "Education and the digital transition in Europe - policies and attitudes", published in 2022 (230 pages. ISBN - 978-619-239-807-1).

The biography of Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva shows many years of experience and commitment to educational policies, project management (under the TEMPUS, LIGHTHOUSE, HORIZON 2020, ERASMUS programs), participation in numerous discussions, round tables, conferences, as well as a rich bibliography with more than 40 publications on the subject of the contest, dating from 2000 to now.

2. Characteristics of the candidate's scientific, teaching and social activities

Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva participated in the competition with 5 articles referenced and indexed in global databases with scientific information and 4 more articles plus 4 studies from peer-reviewed publications. 10 of their citations in materials published in refereed and indexed global databases of scientific information and another 14 citations in articles from peer-reviewed publications are indicated.

In light of current global events – migration, the recently passed pandemic, the advent of artificial intelligence and ever-evolving technologies, innovation in education is becoming increasingly necessary and inevitable, perhaps even urgent. I discovered this topic in a series of publications by Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva, from the problems of the pandemic to the challenges in crisis conditions.

Another advocated and key topic is the financing of education and the related increase in the quality of the educational process. State policy, European funding and regulations based on the idea of the strategic importance of education and its key role for the development of society and the economy are among the problems observed and studied.

Interesting aspects of the presented scientific activity are related to cyber-physical systems for pedagogical rehabilitation, the concept of "communicative action" based on the theory of Habermas, etc. Some of the publications are also based on data from conducted field and quantitative research.

According to the information presented, it can be concluded that the candidate's theoretical developments are also supported by the project activity. The activity is both at the national and international level, including the management of projects with a thematic focus, in which the innovative element and the modern understanding of the role of education are visible.

Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva has developed 25 classroom and 11 non-auditory courses for improvement and/or creation of new programs at NBU. Leads over 20 different study courses in bachelor's and master's programs, including foreign language programs. In recent years, he managed to introduce two new professional areas in the NBU - 1.1. Theory and management of education and 1.2. Pedagogy, as well as to form a team for the "Pedagogy" Section.

He works as an expert and consultant to many institutions - the European Commission, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Anti-Corruption Commission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, etc.

3. Scientific contributions

I fully share the opinion that there should be no rush with the long-term implementation of various actions, both in the direction of enhanced online learning and in the direction of returning to classroom learning. Any form of learning enriches opportunities when it does not take away from others. The digital transition is a social process in which science is called to be the leader, and education must remain in harmony with the environment. I share the thesis that digitization is an inevitable and irreversible process.

1. In the monograph on the competition, presented by Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva, a high degree of clarity was achieved regarding the balance in the educational process.
2. A national empirical study was conducted among students on the effect of online learning during the pandemic.
3. The regulatory framework is outlined - the national and supranational factors that have an impact on scientific and teaching work.
4. Actions for managing the digital transformation in education have been identified, with emphasis on teacher qualification, tracking of results and investments in the "production" of knowledge.
5. A list of initiatives is proposed to strengthen the sense of community in the educational process, which is also argued as a necessity.

4. Personal impressions

Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva is responsible for the commitments made and puts energy into realizing the set goals. Demonstrates loyalty to the NBU and dedication to its mission. Accepts different opinions and willingly discusses alternative solutions, which demonstrates not only knowledge in the field of higher education management, but also skills in effectively applying the principles he stands for. The candidature is supported not only by the scientific activity, but also by the experience and achievements for the NBU accumulated over the years.

5. Conclusion

Based on the competition materials, I believe that there are contributions in the research, teaching and organizational activities of the candidate, Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva, PhD. The documentation meets the requirements and it shows that the minimum requirements set by current legislation in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations of the NBU are covered and exceeded. I express my **positive vote** and propose that Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva, PhD must be elected as a Professor of 1.1. Educational Theory and Management (Higher Education Management).

28.08.2023

Member of the Scientific Jury:

Assoc. Prof. Vencislav Dzhambazov, Ph.D