

## REVIEW

**From:** Prof. Dinko Velichkov Gospodinov, PhD, professional direction 1.1. Theory and management of education

**On:** Scientific papers for participation in a competition for the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.1. Theory and management of education (Management of higher education) for the needs of the New Bulgarian University, announced in SG № 44/ 19.05.2023 with candidate Assoc. Prof. PhD. Elena Blagoeva Hazarbasanova

The review was prepared in accordance with the LDASRB, RIDASRB and the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff at the NBU.

### **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the NBU**

From the presented report of the attestation commission and the report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the NBU by Assoc. Prof. Elena Blagoeva in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.1. Theory and management of education, it is clear that the candidate not only covers requirements, but also significantly exceeds them.

Performance by individual indicators is as follows:

Group A, indicator 1: Defense thesis for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". A diploma from VAK was presented for a defended dissertation work on the topic: The cultural policy of the European Union and the cultural aspects of common policies from 23.02.2009, diploma number 33115. Required 50 points, reported 50 points.

Indicator B: Published habilitation thesis - monograph. For participation in the contest, the monograph is presented: Blagoeva, V. Education and the digital transition in Europe - policies and attitudes. S., 2022, Avangard-Prima, ISBN 978 619 239 807 1, in a volume of 229 pp. Required 100 items, reported 100 points.

Group of indicators D - other publications. Required 200, reported 301 points.

Group of indicators D – citations. Required 100, reported 295 p.

Group of indicators E – required 100, reported 270 p.

Group of indicators G – required 70, reported 270 p.

Group of indicators Ж – required 70, reported 230 p.

Group of indicators I – required 70, reported 245 p.

### **II. Research (creative) activity and results**

**1. Evaluation of the monographic work, creative performances or other publications corresponding in volume and completeness to a monographic work, including an evaluation of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the author.**

As a habilitation thesis, the following monograph is presented in the procedure: Blagoeva, E. Education and the digital transition in Europe - policies and attitudes. Sofia, 2022, Avangard-Prima, ISBN 978 619 239 807 1. The monograph has a volume of 229, is structured in four chapters, the bibliography includes 151 sources, of which 124 are in English. It is dedicated to an up-to-date and at the same time insufficiently researched issue in the theory and practice of education management.

The monograph contains three thematic centers - EU strategies and policies in education, e-learning in the conditions of the Covid crisis and the digitization of education. The first part of the monograph presents the strategic priorities of the EU in the field of education, outlines the institutional and functional aspects of the strategies and policies. The analysis of the effectiveness of the measures to achieve the goals of the strategies and policies can be positively evaluated. Special attention is paid to the activities of the institutions in our country to fulfill these priorities. The educational policies of the EU are examined in great detail, the essence of the European Higher Education Area and the policies of the EU in this area are explained. Based on an in-depth analysis, a critical assessment of the goals of these policies and the state of work on their implementation was made.

The strategies for the development of higher education in Bulgaria for the period 2014-2020 and 2021-2030 have been analyzed in detail and competently. The work on the implementation of the strategies has been analyzed, the main problems in the system of our higher education have been well highlighted, a number of measures have been proposed for their solution. The author's research interests in the management of higher education in the conditions of the Covid crisis have directed her attention to this issue, which is also touched upon in her other publications. A national study was conducted to study the attitude of students towards e-learning in the conditions of the Covid crisis. The methodology of the study is adequate to its goals and is based on a variant of Rosenberg's model adapted by the author. 1004 students from 45 higher education institutions in the country participated in the study, which ensures its representativeness. The analysis on the data is thorough and comprehensive. The conclusions of the research have applied value.

The third thematic center in the monograph – digitalization of education is also developed very well. The place of digitization in modern education, EU policies in this area, activities in our country (strategies, policies, and practices) for their implementation are clarified.

The monograph was developed using many and up-to-date sources of information, but in the exposition, they are used in an appropriate way to avoid information overload. Many practical examples are also used. Each chapter of the monograph ends with well-formulated conclusions reflecting the main ideas and issues under consideration. Some of them are aimed at practice and have a high practical-applied value.

The main scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the monograph can be mentioned:

- a critical analysis was made using many statistical data and practical examples of the goals in the current strategies and policies in the field of higher education of the EU of the activities for their implementation.

- a detailed and objective critical analysis of the activities in our higher education for the implementation of EU strategies and policies was carried out, the main challenges were identified, measures were proposed to solve the identified problems.

- the need for digitalization of education is substantiated, the EU framework in this area is outlined, the policies in our country for digitalization of education are analyzed, a critical analysis of their implementation and the main problems that have arisen is made.

-in a national study, students' attitudes towards e-learning were studied and recommendations were made for higher schools.

## **2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other attached publications (creative works) made after the appointment of the academic position "assoc. prof."**

The remaining publications submitted for participation in the competition include 1 monograph published on the basis of a protected dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" ("European dimensions in education and culture - policies and management". Sofia, 2017, Avangard-Prima, 5 articles in refereed editions (one co-authored and one in English), 4 articles in non-refereed editions (1 co-authored and one in English), two studies in non-refereed editions and two chapters of collective monographs in English.

These publications also develop significant theoretical and practical problems and have a high contribution value. The scientific content of the publications can be highly rated.

Thematically, they could be summarized in the following groups:

- intercultural competences (essence, models, elements, levels of competence);
- EU strategies and policies in the field of education and scientific research (EU educational strategies and policies, activities, problems and measures to solve them);
- management of higher education in Bulgaria (national strategies, activities for their implementation, quality of higher education, problems of higher education in our country);
- digitization of education (essence, challenges, EU and national policies, implementation issues in higher education);
- management of higher education in the conditions of the Covid crisis.

All publications in this group are in peer-reviewed editions, with 5 of them in refereed editions. The topic of the publications corresponds to the profile of the competition.

I accept the applicant's authorship of the submitted publications. The style and subject matter of the publications confirms the authorship on them.

As contributing points in these publications, the outlining of the problems related to the use of research funding in our country by the European Research Council, the education of migrants in the EU (problems and measures to solve them), the policies for the quality of education can be mentioned in the EU and their implementation in our country. A large part of the contributions are related to the management of higher education - quality of education, internationalization, its management in the conditions of Covid 19.

## **3. Quoting from other authors**

295 points are indicated in the reference for citations in accordance with the minimum national requirements of 100 items. 30 citations have been noted within a short period of time,

half of which are in refereed scientific publications, which shows the interest in the author's scientific research.

#### **4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice**

Assoc. Prof. E. Blagoeva is an active participant and leader in national and international projects. For the period 2020-2023, she indicated participation in 5 projects (1 national and 4 international), performing managerial functions in all projects. The international projects are:

1. Project 2020-2023 S2CENE – Strengthening Second Chance Networks in Europe, N 621535-EPP-1-2020-1-PT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN, Erasmus+.
2. Project 2019 - 2022 - European Commission through the Research Executive Agency (REA) - "Support for full inclusion", Contract N 874513, under the SNLS program.
3. Project 2019 - 2021 - Active Citizens Fund, Financial Mechanism of EEA 2014-2021 - "Exercise your rights with knowledge and creativity", Contract N 21/09.10.2019.
4. Project 2018 - 2021 - European Commission through the Research Executive Agency (REA) - "Cyber-Physical Systems for Pedagogical Rehabilitation in Special Education", Contract N 777720, under the Horizon 2020 program, MSCA-RISE.

The national project is Respect against violence - it depends on us and is part of the National Program of Youth Activities of the MYS for 2020.

### **III. Learning and teaching activity**

#### **1. Auditory and non-auditory employment, work in the electronic training module "MOODLE - NBU", provision of student internships and practices, work with students and doctoral students**

Elena Blagoeva started teaching at NBU in 2012 as a chief assistant in administration and management (management of educational and cultural institutions), and since 2020 she is also an associate professor in administration and management (management of education and culture). The disciplines taught by her are mainly in the field of management. She participated in the development of 25 classroom and 11 non-auditory courses at the NBU, most of them in the field of management. She made a great personal contribution to the creation of two new professional fields at NBU – theory and management of education and pedagogy, of three new master's programs: Leadership and Management in Education, Business Communications and Tourism Management.

Organizer and moderator of an International Round Table in 2022 with the participation of representatives from Bulgaria, Portugal, France and Croatia on the topic "Opportunities for a "second chance" in education" under the project "Strengthening the "Second Chance" Networks in Europe".

She is the organizer of a student seminar in the field of inclusive education in 2022 under the "Second Chance" project.

There are authored study materials developed for the study courses led by her, which are included in the "Moodle - NBU" module and are updated periodically. In addition to those required in the module, additional study materials are provided to help students. In some of the courses (almost all of them are in the field of management) he teaches in English. She participated in conducting student seminars and in the "Student Practices" project.

## **2. Work with Erasmus students**

Participated in an international virtual meeting with students under the Erasmus Days in Europe project.

She is the head of a project under the Erasmus+ program S2CENE Project - Strengthening Second Chance Networks in Europe.

## **3. Scores from student surveys**

The candidate in the competition receives high marks for his teaching work in student surveys. With a maximum score of 5.00, the obtained score is 4.65, which indicates a high level of the teaching activity carried out.

## **IV. Administrative and public activity**

Associate Professor E. Blagoeva has extensive practical management experience, as she has held various managerial positions in the administration of the NBU for many years. She is currently the head of the "Pedagogy" Section at the "Foreign Languages and Cultures" Department and the director of the "Pedagogy" Program Council.

E. Blagoeva actively participates in the activities of various NGOs working in the field of education and culture. She is a long-time manager of the "Conceptions" foundation - an NGO working in the field of education and culture. She is also the head of the Tsvete Theater Association, an NGO that works among children and youth in the field of non-formal civic education. She is the head of the "Youth against violence" project implemented by the NGO Art Chaos.

Member of the Board of the LACTEA Center (Local Administrators' Continuing Training in European Affairs). Member of the Bulgarian Association for European Integration and the Community of the European Association for International Education (EAIE).

## **V. Personal impressions of the candidate**

I have none of these.

## **VI. Opinions, recommendations, and notes on the applicant's activities**

The research and publication activity of Associate Professor Elena Blagoeva is aimed at extremely relevant areas of higher education management, such as educational and scientific strategies and policies of the EU, educational strategies and policies for higher education in our country, the digitization of higher education, the management of higher education in the conditions of the covid crisis. She has a professional view and expertise in the field of higher education management.

**Conclusion.** On the basis of the assessment of the candidate's research, teaching and expert activity in the competition, I propose to the Honorable Scientific Jury to propose that Assoc. Prof. Elena Blagoeva Hazarbasanova be elected as a professor in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.1. Theory and management of Education (Management of Higher Education).

05.09.2023

Reviewer:

/prof. PhD Dinko Gospodinov/