

REVIEW

From:

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On:

the scientific works for participation in a competition for the academic position of professor, in professional direction 1.1 Theory and management of education (Management of higher education), announced in SG no. 44/19.05.2023, with Candidate **Associate Professor Dr. Elena Blagoeva**

Grounds for presenting the opinion: participation in the composition of the Scientific Jury for the competition according to Order No. 3-RK-240/18.05.2022 of the Rector of NBU and decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury dated 26.05.2022.

The review was prepared in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for the Implementation of this Law and the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff at NBU. In terms of structure, it consists of 6 parts and a conclusion according to a template for preparing a review for occupying the academic position of "professor" at NBU.

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University

To participate in the competition for the academic position of "professor", Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva presents a self-assessment and evidences that are in full compliance with the provisions of the national legislation and the normative documents of NBU. The candidate has fulfilled the minimum requirements for the scientific and teaching activity for area 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional direction 1.1 Theory and management of education (Management of higher education), determined by the Regulations for the implementation of the Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the requirements of the Ordinance on the development of the academic staff of NBU, which must be met by candidates for the academic position of "professor".

Points on all indicators exceed the minimum number of points required, and on some groups of indicators the excess is significant. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva holds a Master's degree in European Integration from NBU and the Center for European Studies, 1998 - 2000, and a Master's degree in Directing from VITIZ "K. Sarafov", 1985 - 1990, she obtained her PhD degree at the Higher Attestation



Commission - Specialized Scientific Council for Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, in the scientific specialty 05.08.33 "Theory and History of Culture", which is certified with Diploma No. 33115/24.04.2009 and holds a doctorate degree from NBU in the Master's Faculty since 2007.

The monography presented by Assoc. Prof. Blagoeva - "**Education and the digital transition in Europe - policies and attitudes**", ISBN 978-619-239-807-1 is 228 pages long and has been reviewed by Prof. Diyana Yankova, DSc. and Prof. Dr. Dinko Gospodinov.

According to the different groups of indicators, the applicant has presented evidences, through which the following points can be confirmed:

- Group D "Additional scientific publications" - 301 points (200 required);
- Group D "Citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review and in non-refereed journals with scientific review" - 295 points (100 required);
- Group E "Participation/management of scientific projects" - evidence is presented for 270 points (100 required);
- Group G – 270 points (70 required);
- Group 3 – 230 points (70 required);
- Group I – 245 points (70 required).

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.

The subject of the monography "Education and the digital transition in Europe - policies and attitudes" is extremely relevant, with high theoretical and practical value. It analyzes the strategies and policies of the EU in the field of education with an emphasis on higher education and its digitalization, presents an objective picture of the state of e-learning in our higher education, outlines the main problems and proposed measures to solve them. The relevance of the research is determined by the need and responsibility of education (and above all – of higher education) to reform and manage itself in a way that prepares the individual for a fulfilling life in the new era. The research is holistic and covers the development trends in education policies at the European and national level in the light of digital changes and the series of crises, some of which have not been experienced until now. The structure of the monography combines an overview and analysis of the overall context of the educational environment and policies with a gradual focus on higher education and the changes imposed by the digital transition. The formation of education policy is part of the social choice that each country makes, depending on what



it wants and thinks it can achieve. The results of education (and its reforms) are not visible in the short term. That is why policies should be carefully considered by all stakeholders and their implementation should be subject to constant monitoring and analysis. This is also one of the most serious contributions of the author, as she does not limit herself to certain aspects of the topic, but deploys her analysis in a wide range, both from a European and national point of view, and in relation to all educational stages. In this way, a general picture of the processes and measures is built, by which the adequacy and continuity of the policies (including in Bulgaria) can be traced from one educational level to another up to higher education. Despite the wide scope, the structure is clear and logical. It is a very good decision that each chapter ends with a summary, in which the author briefly presents the main conclusions. Finally, general conclusions and recommendations are made. They summarize the most important of the results and the discussion, and indicate the possibilities for future research.

The conducted in-depth research in a relatively new problem area - the impact of the digital transition on education - which has long-term relevance and essential importance for the processes of formation of the future "knowledge-based society", as well as the large-scale study in the field of education management (current strategies and policies of the EU and Bulgaria), from different points of view, accompanied by an in-depth critical analysis gives me reason to conclude that the presented monographic work has the character of an independent and complete study. The contributing moments that stand out are in the following directions:

- The interrelationships between education policies and management, including digitalization management processes in education, at supra-national, national and institutional levels, as well as the specific roles and responsibilities of each of these levels, have been identified;
- A medium-term approach to changes in higher education regarding digitization is argued, justifying the need for coherence between activities, values, methods, principles, expectations and results in order to achieve sustainable and positive change in the institution and to ensure quality of training;
- Recommendations for possible strategies and specific measures have been formulated based on the conclusions drawn from the overall study and the specific study of student attitudes.

2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other attached publications (creative performances) made after the appointment of the academic position of "Associate Professor".



In the self-assessment and evidentiary materials, Assoc. Prof. Blagoeva presented publications after the appointment of the academic position of "associate professor", the total of which amounts to 301 points out of the required 200 points under indicator group G.

In 2017, the candidate published a book (The European Dimension in Education and Culture – Policies and Management. Sofia: Avangard Prima, 2017, 253 pages. ISBN: 978-619-160-752-5, Reviewers: Prof. Tolya Stoitsova, DSc; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elmira Bancheva) based on her dissertation, which has been updated.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva has presented 2 collective monographs, 5 articles and reports (1 in English co-authored) published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information - Web of Science and SCOPUS, 4 articles and reports in scientific collections and periodicals, 1 of which is in a foreign language, 2 studies in non-refereed peer-reviewed publications or in edited collective volumes. The content analysis of the scientific production of the candidate for professorship presented at the competition shows that it is in the field of the announced competition, that it is relevant, up-to-date and significant for science, practice and education. The publications are related to the study of a wide range of higher education management issues - internationalization, international cooperation, analysis of programs and educational systems, development of educational policies and practices in accordance with EU policies in the field of scientific research and technological development, models of formation and development of intercultural competence (ICC) in management. The scientific and scientific-applied contributions in these publications are related to the following:

- Study of the European perspective for the development of education and culture and a systematic analysis of the interrelationship of policies - strategies - programs, through the prism of management and administration processes;
- Analysis of opportunities and challenges for the financing of quality science in the EU through the programs of the European Research Council;
- Research of the specific dimensions (characteristics) of the models for the formation of high levels of intercultural competence (ICC), as a tool for adequate intercultural dialogue and competitiveness in the conditions of globalization and continuous pressure for changes. Critical analysis and presentation of arguments that emphasize the strategic role of the models for the evaluation of ICC, as well as the development of training modules and programs in HE, necessary for the formation of high levels of ICC;



- As a result of research and analysis, the strategic importance of education for the development of society and the economy has been specified and further developed. In the conditions of global competition and social changes, the important goals for Europe - social cohesion, competitiveness and sustainable growth - can be achieved by mobilizing resources to implement the necessary reforms in European education systems.
- A new cognitive architecture RELA for advanced learning with robots - intended for implementation in inclusive education through a cyber-physical system for pedagogical rehabilitation - has been researched and analyzed.

3. Citation.

Assoc. Prof. Blagoeva's publications submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position "professor" are cited in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information (10 citations were found), as well as in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review and in peer-reviewed journals (15 citations were found).

I believe that scientific production is of high scientific quality, presented in authoritative publications and accessible to a wide audience. The subject matter of the scientific production is directed to specific questions of science and practice and has contemporary scientific and applied importance.

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

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva is the head of 4 international scientific or educational projects and 2 national ones. Has participated in 1 international scientific or educational project and 2 national research projects. I believe that the candidate has an undeniable potential to expand his participation in research projects in the European scientific space as a leader, as well as to continue his efforts to integrate his research work with modern aspects of teaching and learning.

III. Learning and teaching activities

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

Associate Professor Dr. Elena Blagoeva has developed 25 lecture courses and 11 non-auditory courses for the improvement of programs and the creation of new ones. As of 2023, 16 lecture courses and 7 non-auditory courses are active for teaching students in the BP "Primary School Pedagogy and Foreign Language" - 2 courses, BP "Administration and Management" (+miner) and BP "Business Management



and Entrepreneurship" – 6 courses, Master's program "Leadership and Management in Education" (full-time and distance learning) – 3 courses, Master's program "Leadership and Public Management" – 3 courses and 1 for the Master's program "English Language and Professional Communication" (Joint program with York University). There are also 3 foreign language courses. The courses are annually updated in the electronic training module "Moodle - NBU". She performed lecture and extra-auditory work required. She is a communicative person and works successfully with students in her teaching activities. The proof of this is the establishment of the Pedagogy Section within the "Foreign Languages and Culture" Department, the organization of an international round table "Second Chance Education Opportunities" , as well as her participation in the "Economy Film Days Festival" forum - a joint project of the "Administration and Management" Department ", NBU and Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, University of Fribourg, under the auspices of the Ambassador of Switzerland. The event is related to internationalization of the educational process at NBU and development of the applied approach for interactive learning. She was an Academic mentor of 21 (Phase1) and 6 (Phase2) students within the framework of "Student Practices" national project. Elena Blagoeva is a member of the organizational and scientific committee of 2 international scientific conferences - "Status quo, challenges and changes in public administration" and "Power, management and social development" of Administration and Management Department. From the reference in the e-teacher, it is clear that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva has performed scientific guidance and reviews and has participated in various committees - 24 times.

2. Engagements with Erasmus student.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva has worked with Erasmus students from BP "Theatre" and BP "Administration and Management". Due to the short period of existence of the programs in the "Pedagogy" section, they do not yet have a student exchange under the Erasmus + program.

3. Student survey ratings.

As can be seen from the report from the Center for Quality and Evaluation, the teaching activity of Assoc. Dr. Blagoeva was rated excellent by the students. Their average course satisfaction rating over the past 10 semesters is 4.65 out of 5. Student evaluation is a testament to her knowledge, competence and teaching skills.

IV. Administrative and social activity

1. Participation in collective management bodies of NBU.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva is the head of the "Pedagogy" section in the Department of "Foreign Languages and Cultures", NBU since 2022. She has been a Director of two Program Councils – for Pedagogy (2020-2022) and for the "Public Administration" department from 2015/2016. He has participated in:

- meetings of NBU Academic Council (2000-2006).
- meetings of the Rector's Council (2000-2002).

In the capacity of Head of the "Pedagogy" section she has developed two new professional directions in NBU - 1.1. Theory and management of education and 1.2. Pedagogy and has created a team for the "Pedagogy" Section with four full time teachers. She is also a head and member of the team for the national accreditation of the programs at the Department of "Foreign Languages and Cultures" in two professional areas 1.1. Theory and management of education and 1.2. Pedagogy.

2. Social activity.

In the period 2020-2023, she is the project manager of the Erasmus K3 project "Strengthening the Second Chance Network in Europe". The main goal is a scientific study of the state of those dropping out of education and identification of measures against this process in Bulgaria, France, Portugal and Croatia. The immediate results are related to the consolidation of organizations from Bulgaria and their inclusion in the European network for sharing experience and assimilating know-how. He is a member of the Board of the Center LACTEA (Local Administrators' Continuing Training in European Affairs), Sofia, as well as of the "Concepts - Bulgaria" Foundation - an NGO in the field of culture and education. Since 2015, he has been a member of the editorial board of "Methodology, interdisciplinarity, analyses, strategies", Series "Leadership, society, strategic visions" – a periodical publication of the "Administration and Management" Department at NBU.

3. Students' Recruitment.

With her administrative and social activities, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva contributes to the development and improvement of the educational process in various bachelor's and master's programs at NBU. She is the head of the working group for the development of professional direction 1.2. and BP "Elementary school pedagogy and foreign language", in which 63 students are trained. Creates and accredits the MP "Leadership and Management in Education" in PN 1.1, in which 13 students are trained for 2 years.

V. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)

I know Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva as highly responsible, creative, precise and proactive in her work. My

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<i>Документът е собственост на НБУ! Принтирани и електронни копия, извън посочените в таблицата за контролирани екземпляри на този документ, са неконтролирани. При съмнение, преди ползване, провери за актуалност на версията в Списъка на вътрешните нормативни актове на НБУ.</i>		



immediate impressions are formed due to the fact that our professional interests are in close scientific fields and we have had the opportunity to exchange ideas in various forums. My personal impressions of her research, teaching and public activities are entirely positive. She is a thorough researcher, erudite teacher, has active professional contacts with practice.

VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activity and achievements of the candidate

I have no critical remarks about the materials presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva. I recommend that she continue her research in the field of higher education management, adding to the existing research *an assessment of the impact of the new challenges, opportunities and risks of digitization and the integration of artificial intelligence on the functioning of the system and ways of working*. I believe that the candidate has an undeniable potential to participate in research projects in the European scientific space and has the knowledge to expand his research in the field of intercultural competences, management of educational projects, heuristic methods and management decisions and strategic thinking.

Conclusion

The candidacy of Associate Professor Dr. Elena Blagoeva for the academic position of "professor" fully complies with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation and the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff at NBU. The scientific publications of the candidate in the competition contain important theoretical, methodological and practical contributions, which are the fruit of her personal scientific research and further develop management science.

On these grounds, I express my positive assessment of the submitted candidature and declare that I will categorically support the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Blagoeva to the academic position of "professor" at NBU in the professional direction 1.1 Theory and management of education (Management of higher education).

17.08.2023

Prof. Dr. Kristiyan Hadjiev:

Sofia

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