



SCIENTIFIC OPINION

Concerning: the competition for the position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific speciality Economics and Management (Agriculture), announced in State Gazette No. 7 of 23.01.2024.

Candidate for participation in the competition: Chief Assistant Professor PhD Mariana Ivanova Shishkova, Agricultural University of Plovdiv

Scientific opinion prepared by: Associate Professor PhD Nadezhda Georgieva Blagoeva, field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific speciality Finance, money circulation, credit and insurance, appointed according to Order No. RD 16-404 / 20.03.2024 of the Rector of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv as a member of the scientific jury.

1. Brief introduction of the candidate.

Chief Assistant Professor PhD Mariana Ivanova Shishkova is the only candidate for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, announced for the needs of the Department of Economics at the Agricultural University of Plovdiv. All the documents for participation in the competition are accurately prepared in accordance with all the requirements of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation.

In her professional career, Mariana Shishkova has graduated from Agricultural University. There, she obtained her bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics in 2009. A few years later, after completing her master's degree in financial management at Plovdiv University, she continued her education again at the Agricultural University as a PhD student. In 2017, she was appointed as a full-time assistant to meet the needs of the Department of Economics. In 2018, she successfully defended her doctoral degree in Economics and Management. This allowed her to realise the next step in her professional development, and from the end of 2018 until now, she has held the position of Senior Assistant Professor. She is fluent in English and Russian, both written and spoken. She has excellent digital skills acquired during her secondary education at MG Plovdiv, which facilitates the development of her scientific activity.

2. General description of the scientific production.

In the competition for "Associate Professor", Chief Assistant Professor PhD Mariana Shishkova participates with a total output of 28 works, grouped as follows:

Scientific publications in the field of specialisation- 28 in total, including:

- Publications related to the doctoral dissertation - 3 issues which are not under consideration
- Publications with impact factor - 4
- Publications in peer-reviewed and refereed scientific journals - 15
- Publications in conference proceedings - 5
- Habilitation work - monograph - 1 issue.

The monographic work on "Potential and prerequisites for the development of bioeconomy in Bulgaria" is co-authored with two other authors. Still, the presented distribution and participation of the authors undoubtedly prove the candidate's personal contribution with more than the required 100 pages, thus confirming the work as a monograph.

For the assessment, 29 works are subject to analysis.

Mariyana Shishkova's personal contribution to the mentioned 25 works is illustrated by the fact that she is:

- Sole author in 4 or 16%
- First author in 1 or 4%
- Second author in 8 or 32%
- Third or subsequent author in the remaining 11 or 44%

The fact that in most of her publications, Shishkova is part of a scientific team testifies to her excellent teamwork skills. In addition, she can also independently conduct research, as evidenced by her independent publications. All of the candidate's publications are in English except for three publications. This contributes to better readability, annotation, and dissemination of the achievements of the author's research.

3. Teaching Activities.

Chief Assist. Prof Shishkova is an established lecturer in the Department of Economics. She started her teaching activity by conducting exercises even as a PhD student. Her teaching experience as an already-appointed assistant professor at Agricultural University amounts to 6 years, 10 months and 11 days. During this time, the candidate has lectured and exercised to students of various disciplines at both bachelor's and master's degree programs in a range of disciplines such as Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Policy, Labour Economics, Cooperative Economics, EU Economics, Business Economics, European Agricultural Policy, Sustainable Development and Circular Economy, European Economic Integration, etc. All this testifies to the candidate's exceptionally good competence and preparation.

The academic workload of the candidate.

According to the submitted reference, in the last five academic years, from 2018/2019 to 2022/2023, Shishkova's workload amounts to 4 2205,8 hours or an average of 845,16 hours per year. These include direct and extra-curricular employment in the bachelor's and master's degree programmes and 83 hours in a foreign language.

Her teaching activity is complemented by the supervision of 12 graduates who have successfully defended their diplomas in the last five years. In addition, Shishkova is a mentor of a team of students who won the national round of the Biobased Innovation Student Challenge Europe 2023.

4. Scientific research activity.

Areas of publication.

Shishkova presented scientific works, including abstracts, which mainly covered three thematic areas, characterising her scientific searches. These are:

- Social Capital and Sustainable Development;
- Bioeconomics;
- Impact of the Common Agricultural Policy on Bulgarian Agriculture.

These topics are entirely in line with the scientific specialisation of the announced competition. Based on her overall scientific research activity, the author formulates separately for each thematic area of her contributions, dividing them into practical-applied and theoretical-methodological. I fully accept the statement of contributions prepared by the candidate, as it is based on her overall publication activity. The latter gives her 258.08 points, which exceeds the points required by law.

Citation and referencing of scientific production.

Chief Assistant Professor Shishkova's scientific production is well-known among specialists in the field. It has become known to the research community, as evidenced by the candidate's noted citations. The reference lists 12 citations, most of which are in reputable journals in Scopus and Web of Science. These give her a total of 165 points, well above the points required by law.

Participation in research projects.

Chief Asst. Prof. Shishkova has actively participated in 4 projects, 3 national, scientific-educational and 1 international. These are, respectively the National Research Program "Healthy Foods for a Strong Bioeconomy and Quality of Life" 2019 - 2023, funded by the Ministry of Education and Science, "Innovative Models for Increasing the Competitiveness of Agricultural Farms in Bulgaria", funded by the National Research Fund, National Program "Young Scientists and Postdoctoral Fellows", funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and "European Alliance "UNIGreen"

The table with fulfilled scientific-metric criteria prepared by the candidate for the academic position of "associate professor" shows that her overall scientific activity earns her 658.75 points, which is well above the 400 points required by the regulations.

5. Remarks and recommendations.

I have no remarks on the documents and scientific production submitted for the competition. I consider that they fully meet the requirements for the academic position of

Associate Professor. The only recommendation I could make to Chief Assistant Professor Shishkova is to enrich her teaching activity by preparing educational materials and textbooks for students.

6. Conclusion.

Based on the analysis of the candidate's pedagogical, scientific and scientific-applied activities, I consider that Chief Assistant Professor Mariana Ivanova Shishkova meets the requirements of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations of the Agricultural University for its implementation.

Chief Assist. Prof. Mariana Shishkova's intensive teaching activities and her work with students and graduates establish her as one of the proven lecturers among the Department of Economics staff of the Agricultural University. She combines all of this with active publishing activity, which ranks her among the researchers and specialists in Agricultural Economics. The presented scientific activity fully meets the requirements for obtaining the academic position of „Associate Professor“.

All this gives me a reason to evaluate her overall activity **POSITIVELY**.

I allow myself to propose to the Honorable Scientific Jury to vote positively and the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv to appoint **Chief Assist. Prof. Mariana Ivanova Shishkova** as "**Associate Professor**" in the scientific field of **Economics and Management (Agriculture)**.

29.04.2024

Plovdiv

Prepared the scientific opinion:

(Assoc. Prof. Nadezhda Blagoeva, PhD)

