



STATEMENT

regarding the competition for "Associate Professor" in the scientific speciality Economics and Management, announced in SG No. 7 of 23.01.2024 with candidate
Ch. assistant Dr. Mariana Ivanova Shishkova
by prof. Dr.Habil. Ivan Stoykov Kanchev - University of National and World Economy,
appointed according to Order 16-404/ 20.03.2024 by the Rector of the Agrarian
University - Plovdiv as a member of the scientific jury.

1. Brief presentation of the candidate.

The candidate holds a Bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics from the Agricultural University (2009) and a Master's degree in Financial Management from the University of Plovdiv (2011). In 2017, she was appointed to the academic position of Assistant Professor and in 2018 she was elected to the position of Senior Assistant Professor.

The candidate has work experience in the period 2009-2017 successively as a trainee, assistant and financial manager at the "Earth-Source for Income" Foundation with the subject of activity financial management and control of implementation of organizational projects.

2. General description of the scientific output.

In the competition for "Associate Professor" Senior assist.prof. Mariana Shishkova participates with a total output of 34 works, grouped as follows:

- ❖ Scientific-publications on the nomenclatural specialty - 28 pieces, of them:
 - Publications related to the doctoral dissertation - 3 issues, which are not under consideration;
 - Monograph - 1 issue - academic publication of Agricultural University of Plovdiv;
 - 4 scientific publications, refereed and indexed in SCOPUS;
 - 15 scientific publications, refereed and indexed in Web of Science;
 - 5 scientific publications refereed in other databases.

The total of the publications submitted by the candidate is: 4 independent publications; on 2 publications she is the first author and 17 publications are in English.

The recapitulation with reference on the quantitative indicators of the candidate shows that the scientific output of Senior Assist. Prof. exceeds the established minimum requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor at national and university level. The data show that out of the total number of points 273,75 the highest share has articles and reports published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world databases of scientific information - 257 p. followed by citations - 165 p.

3. Teaching activity

The candidate's teaching activity over the last 5 years significantly exceeds the statutory requirements for employment as a lecturer at the University of Agriculture.

Senior assist.prof. Shishkova gives lectures and exercises on the academic disciplines in the Bachelor and Master degree programmes - a total of 4 disciplines (Business Economics, Agricultural Economics, European Agricultural Policy and Labour Economics).

The candidate has supervised one successfully defended PhD student.

The competition dossier does not contain information on developed and published teaching materials.

4. General evaluation of the presented scientific works and of the scientific results and contributions contained in them

For the preparation of the opinion, all submitted scientific works are subject to analysis and evaluation.

In thematic and content terms, the candidate groups his scientific output in three main areas: Social Capital and Sustainable Development, Bioeconomics and Impact of the Common Agricultural Policy on Bulgarian Agriculture.

Among these scientific areas, most significant are the results and contributions contained in the first scientific area - 6 publications with No. 1, 4, 6, 7, 12 and 15. In this group of publications, the importance of social capital and entrepreneurship for promoting economic activity and for accelerating and improving the results of economic activity is highlighted. In these papers, studies and analyses of existing family and non-family networks have been carried out by determining the level and dynamics of social capital of organizations supporting entrepreneurship development in rural areas of the country. Recommendations and policies are formulated to improve human and social capital.

In theoretical-methodological aspect the following scientific results stand out, which can be formulated as methodological and practical-applied contributions:

- ✓ A methodology for assessing the level of social capital is adapted and tools for achieving sustainable local development are proposed;
- ✓ A model for assessing the impact of factor choices on LAG performance is developed and proposed;
- ✓ The main challenges in implementing social farming in the country are formulated;
- ✓ Based on the results of a comparative analysis between Bulgaria's sustainable development indicators and those of the EU-28, opportunities for sustainable growth and for increased employment in some of Bulgaria's rural areas have been identified.

The developments in the second scientific field, which are related to bioeconomics - 6 publications with No. 3, 14, 20, 21, 23 and the monograph - also deserve high praise.

These publications contain comparative analyses of bioeconomy development strategies at global and national level, outline the main concepts and vision for development. An agenda for prospects and recommendations for improving specialization and concentration of production are offered.

The following methodological and practical-applied results are highlighted under the second scientific direction:

- ✓ The main directions for the development of the bioeconomy of Bulgaria are presented and specified. Recommendations for increasing the bioeconomic potential of the country with the main cereals and technical crops are substantiated;
- ✓ The role of the LEADER/WIMOR approach in the implementation of bioeconomy initiatives is revealed. Maps have been compiled revealing the territorial and technological potential of wheat, grain maize and sunflower for biomass production.

- ✓ The need for further research into new technologies to reduce the costs of dry biomass production from oilseed rose is revealed.
- ✓ Good practices in the field of cooperation of local initiative groups for the implementation of projects concerning cultural, historical and natural heritage are presented, as well as guidelines for overcoming existing difficulties.

Also of interest are the papers from the third research strand "The impact of the CAP on Bulgarian agriculture" - 12 publications with No 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 22 and 24). In these papers the focus is presented on direct payments, which are a key component and lead in practice to major changes in the specialization and concentration of Bulgarian agriculture. The main objective of these developments is that the implementation of direct payments leads to a reduction of sectoral and structural imbalances in agricultural production and to changes in the polarisation of Bulgarian farms.

In this scientific direction, the works highlight practical-applied publications with highlighted methodological contributions and specific directions for changing the current practice, the most important of which are:

- ✓ Adapted methodology for analysis and evaluation of the distribution of direct payments by groups of farms;
- ✓ An updated methodology for assessing farmers' attitudes towards the Common Agricultural Policy and its effects on production practices is proposed;
- ✓ Indicators for assessing competitive advantages in sunflower production are specified and adapted;
- ✓ The role of small and family farms in achieving sustainable rural development is revealed and argued;
- ✓ The place and role of young farmers in the country is assessed. Suggests guidelines for ensuring intergenerational continuity

My assessment of the scientific research activity of Senior Assist. Prof. Shishkova is that she has qualities of an established researcher and scientist. She has published significant scientific and applied developments that contribute to the expansion of the field of methodological and scientific-applied achievements in the field of sustainable economic development of the agricultural sector and bioeconomy of Bulgaria.

5. Scientific research

The scientific production of the Senior assist. prof. Shishkova has received public recognition - 20 scientific articles have been cited in specialized scientific developments.

The candidate possesses skills and competences that have found manifestation in the development of scientific projects and diverse expert activities such as participation in one national project funded by the National Research Fund 2017; national projects funded by the Ministry of Education - 2 pcs. (2018) and one international educational project.

The candidate's project developments are related to the implementation of innovative models to increase the competitiveness of agricultural farms in Bulgaria, national problems of bioeconomics and training of young scientists and post-doctoral students.

Shishkova has organized and participated in national forums of young farmers and students of the Agricultural University of Plovdiv. She has also participated in organizational events related to the activities of the NGO sector in Bulgaria, sustainable rural development and small business support.

6. Notes and recommendations

I recommend the candidate to use the results of her research for the development and publication of university textbooks, as well as to increase the number of independent research papers.

Conclusion.

I propose the Honorable Scientific Jury to vote positively, and the Faculty of Economics of the Agrarian University - Sofia to appoint Mariana Ivanova Shishkova as Associate Professor in Economics and Management (Agriculture).

25.04.2024.

Member of scientific jury:


(Prof. Ivan Kanchev)