



## REVIEW

concerning the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” in the scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Agriculture)”, announced in State Gazette No. 99 of 21.11.2026, with candidate Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov Hristov, for the needs of the Department of Economics, Agricultural University – Plovdiv

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Georgiev Zlatinov, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8 Economics, appointed pursuant to Order No. RD 16-134/26.01.2026 of the Rector of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv

### 1. General information on the candidate’s academic and thematic development

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov Hristov is a long-standing lecturer in the Department of Economics at the Agricultural University – Plovdiv. His academic career has developed consistently and steadily within the scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Agriculture)”.

Dr. Hristov’s professional experience includes both academic and administrative and expert activity in the field of agricultural economics and agricultural policy. Prior to his appointment as a lecturer, he worked as an expert within the system of the Ministry of Agriculture, including in the “Agrostatistics” Directorate, where he participated in the collection and analysis of statistical information, as well as in the development and implementation of rural development policies.

Dr. Hristov’s education corresponds fully to the scientific specialty of the announced competition and demonstrates consistent academic development in the field of agricultural economics. He obtained his PhD degree in “Economics and Management (Agriculture)” from the Agricultural University – Plovdiv. Prior to that, he completed a Master’s degree in “Management of Agribusiness Organizations” and a second Master’s degree in “Accounting and Control,” which provided him with in-depth managerial and financial training. His initial higher education is a Bachelor’s degree in “Agricultural Economics,” also obtained at the Agricultural University.

Dr. Hristov has completed specialized international training related to precision agriculture and socio-economic policies. In the context of the present competition for the position of Associate Professor, it may be concluded that his professional and educational background fully corresponds to the academic development within the relevant scientific specialty.

## **2. General description of the submitted materials**

In the competition for Associate Professor, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov Hristov participates with a total of 21 scholarly works, structured as follows:

- Publications indexed in Scopus – 2 (entirely in English);
- Publications indexed in Web of Science – 15 (entirely in English);
- Publications indexed in other databases – 2 (1 in English);
- Monograph – 1;
- Book based on a defended doctoral dissertation – 1.

The thematic focus of the publications demonstrates continuity and development – from the dissertation research on family farms to a broader analysis of the structural transformation of the agricultural sector and regional development.

## **3. Main research directions. Demonstrated ability to lead research**

In the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov participates with a comprehensive body of scholarly work that not only meets but significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements in accordance with the Academic Staff Development Act (ZRASRB) and its Implementing Regulations. The submitted works are thematically interconnected, conceptually coherent, and demonstrate a clearly defined and sustainable research profile in the field of Economics and Management (Agriculture).

A central place in the documentation is occupied by the habilitation thesis – the monograph “Impact of Structural Changes in the Agricultural Sector on the Development of Rural Areas in Bulgaria” (2025). The work represents an independent, comprehensive, and completed scientific study with clearly formulated objectives and tasks, a well-grounded methodology, and substantiated conclusions. It analyses the dynamics of structural transformations in Bulgarian agriculture in the context of EU membership and the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy. The author examines the theoretical foundations of structural change, the restructuring of agriculture at sectoral and regional levels, the institutional transformations after 2020, and the opportunities for achieving balanced regional development.

Particular attention deserves the methodology developed by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov for assessing structural changes and their impact on rural areas. The study employs specialization and concentration indices (including the Herfindahl index), analysis of farm economic size through the Standard Output indicator, as well as comparative regional analysis. The combination of physical and value-based indicators allows for the construction of a detailed and objective picture of the sector’s structural evolution. The monograph convincingly demonstrates the processes of land concentration and the increasing polarization between small and large farms, as well as their implications for the socio-economic development of rural areas.

Alongside the habilitation thesis, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov presents publications within the scientific specialty, including papers indexed in SCOPUS and Web of Science, articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals, papers presented at international and national scientific conferences, as well as a published book based on his defended PhD thesis. The total number of points calculated under the national

scientometric criteria exceeds 600, compared to the required minimum of 400 points, clearly demonstrating not only compliance with but significant surpassing of the regulatory criteria. The candidate's personal contribution is clearly identifiable, as he is the leading or first author in a substantial share of the publications.

Thematically, his scientific production can be grouped into several main research directions.

The first direction concerns structural changes in the agricultural sector. In the monograph and related publications, the author analyses transformations in the structure of agriculture, changes in the number and size of farms, concentration of utilised agricultural area, and regional disparities. The analysis covers the period before and after Bulgaria's accession to the EU and reveals the formation of a dualistic structure characterized by the dominant role of large farms. Dr. Hristov convincingly links these processes to the institutional environment and the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The second direction addresses the Common Agricultural Policy and rural development. In several publications, the author analyses the concentration and distribution of direct payments, the impact of support on different types of farms, and the imbalances among subsectors such as crop production and livestock farming. He highlights the need for a more territorially differentiated support model tailored to the specific needs of different regions. The scientific results are characterized by a critical yet well-argued assessment of policy effectiveness and clearly formulated recommendations for improvement.

The third direction focuses on small and family farms. In his doctoral dissertation and subsequent book (2023), the author examines the possibilities for their sustainable development, the challenges in accessing financing, and the administrative difficulties in participating in measures under the Rural Development Programme. Concrete recommendations are formulated to improve access to support and strengthen the role of the family-based farming model in Bulgarian agriculture.

The fourth direction relates to competitiveness and value-added enhancement in the agricultural sector. Methodological approaches for assessing farm competitiveness are developed, emphasizing diversification, innovation, and integration along the value chain. The analyses demonstrate the need for restructuring towards higher levels of processing and stronger market orientation in order to ensure sustainable rural development.

The project activity of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov is consistent and thematically aligned with his research profile in agricultural economics, structural change, and rural development. He has participated in national research projects aimed at enhancing farm competitiveness and analysing transformations in the agricultural sector, complementing and extending his main research directions.

At the international level, the candidate has been involved in projects under European programmes related to innovation in agricultural education and the development of new training modules in precision agriculture. His participation in these initiatives demonstrates the ability to work in an international environment, contribute to the

internationalization of the university, and integrate research results into the educational process.

In conclusion, the presented scientific output is thematically coherent, methodologically sound, and clearly oriented toward practical application. Dr. Hristov demonstrates profound expertise in agricultural economics, the ability to apply modern analytical methods, and the capacity to formulate scientifically substantiated conclusions and policy recommendations.

#### **4. Assessment of the Candidate's Teaching Qualifications and Activities. His Role in the Training of Young Researchers**

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Hristov has 15 years of teaching experience in the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Economics of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv. Over the years, he has delivered lectures and seminars in key disciplines, including: Rural Development; World Agriculture; Project Development and Management; Project Evaluation; Agricultural Economics; Economic-Mathematical Modelling; and Regional Economics. His teaching activities cover both Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes.

Documentation has been provided indicating that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov has supervised 24 graduate students. This is indicative of active and sustained engagement in the educational process, as well as of the trust placed in him by students with regard to his professional and academic competence.

#### **5. Significance of the Achieved Results, Demonstrated through Citations, Publications in Prestigious Journals, Awards, Membership in International and National Scientific Bodies, etc.**

The scientific results of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov have been published in international scientific journals indexed in globally recognized databases such as Scopus and Web of Science Core Collection. This is a substantial indicator of the quality of the research, as publications in such journals undergo a rigorous international peer-review and selection process. Their indexing in authoritative scientific databases ensures international visibility, accessibility, and recognition within the academic community.

The presence of citations in scientific publications indexed in international databases represents an objective indicator of the acceptance and utilization of the research results by other scholars. Citability demonstrates that the issues addressed by the author are relevant and that the conclusions and recommendations put forward are reflected in subsequent scientific studies and analyses.

The thematic consistency of the publications, their strong connection with the habilitation thesis, and the clear focus on structural changes, the Common Agricultural Policy, and rural development indicate a stable and well-established research profile. Dr. Hristov has established himself as a researcher in the field of agricultural economics, with specific expertise in the analysis of institutional and economic factors determining the development of agricultural structures and rural territories.

## **6. Significance of the Contributions to Science and Practice. Reasoned Assessment of the Candidate's Clearly Defined Research Profile**

The research activity of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov is characterized by a clearly defined thematic profile, consistency, and progressive development over time. From the doctoral dissertation devoted to the development opportunities of family farms, through publications addressing the distribution of direct payments and access to support, to the habilitation monograph analyzing structural transformations in the agricultural sector, a logical and conceptual continuity can be clearly traced.

This thematic concentration demonstrates the formation of a sustainable research profile in the field of economics and management of agriculture, with a strong orientation toward the real problems of Bulgarian agriculture and rural areas. Publications in international journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science testify to the integration of his research within the European scientific context and to its international recognition.

A distinctive feature of Dr. Hristov's scholarly work is the combination of theoretical analysis with empirical research based on statistical data from agricultural censuses, data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Eurostat, and other official sources. This provides a high degree of validity and practical applicability to the conclusions drawn.

The outlined contributions of Dr. Hristov's scientific activity provide sufficient grounds to conclude that he possesses a clearly established, sustainable, and consistently developing research profile that fully corresponds to the announced scientific specialty.

### **I. ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

In his scientific works, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov develops a conceptual framework for analyzing structural changes in the agricultural sector and their impact on rural development. He defends the thesis of deepening structural polarization in Bulgarian agriculture, expressed in the concentration of utilized agricultural area and production resources in large farms and the declining relative share of small-scale structures. The analysis traces the dynamics of these processes at both sectoral and regional levels.

The publications submitted for the competition establish the relationship between the institutional environment, the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the transformation of the production structure, demonstrating how support mechanisms influence the degree of concentration and specialization. An integrated approach to assessing sustainable rural development is proposed, combining economic, social, and regional indicators and providing a basis for formulating more effective sectoral policies.

### **II. METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

In his research, Dr. Hristov applies and adapts quantitative methods for assessing concentration and specialization in agriculture, including the Herfindahl index and a specialization index tailored to the specifics of available statistical data. A combined analysis based on farm economic size (Standard Output) and utilized agricultural area has been employed, allowing for a more precise differentiation and interpretation of structural changes in the sector.

Dr. Hristov has developed a methodological framework for assessing the impact of direct payments on different types of farms, including a comparative dynamic analysis before and after Bulgaria's accession to the European Union. This enables a more objective and well-argued evaluation of the effects of European policies on the transformation of the agricultural structure.

### **III. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

In his scientific works, Dr. Hristov systematizes the main trends in the development of Bulgarian agriculture after 2007, analyzing changes in production structure, land use, and farm size. The research traces transformations in individual sub-sectors and reveals increasing differentiation among various types of agricultural structures.

Dr. Hristov demonstrates the strong dependence of certain sub-sectors on the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy, as well as the uneven distribution of public support. Regional differences in agricultural structure are analyzed, and the factors determining the varying degrees of adaptability of farms to market and institutional conditions are identified. Particular attention is paid to the problems faced by small and semi-market farms in accessing financing and investment support, outlining both the constraints and opportunities for their sustainable development.

### **IV. APPLIED CONTRIBUTIONS**

Dr. Hristov formulates specific recommendations for optimizing the distribution of direct payments in order to limit the excessive concentration of public resources among a limited number of large farms. Measures are proposed to encourage family and small-scale farms by improving their access to investment instruments, financial schemes, and specialized advisory services.

Guidelines are also proposed for achieving more balanced regional development, taking into account the demographic, economic, and structural characteristics of rural areas. The conclusions and recommendations have a clearly expressed practical orientation and can be utilized in the development and updating of strategic documents and policies within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2023–2027.

## **7. Critical Remarks and Recommendations**

Some of the submitted publications are co-authored, which is natural and characteristic of contemporary scientific research, particularly in the context of international collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches. At the same time, with a view to the candidate's further establishment as a leading researcher in the field, it may be recommended that the relative share of single-authored publications be increased in his future research activity, especially in journals with higher impact factors and greater international visibility.

The topic of the ecological transformation of the agricultural sector, which is highly relevant and significant in the context of the European Green Deal and the new Common Agricultural Policy, could be further deepened through the application of quantitative sustainability assessment models. Expanding research in this direction would contribute to a more comprehensive integration of the economic, environmental,

and social dimensions of sustainable development in Dr. Hristov's future scholarly work.

### **8. Personal Impressions and Opinion of the Reviewer**

I do not personally know the candidate and have had no direct professional contact with him beyond the framework of the present competition procedure. My evaluation is based entirely on the submitted scientific works, the accompanying documentation, and the materials provided for the competition.

Based on the analysis of his overall scientific and teaching activity, I conclude that the candidate for Associate Professor demonstrates professionalism, academic integrity, and sustainable academic development. He possesses a clearly established research profile in the field of agricultural economics and actively participates in academic life through publication activity, project involvement, and teaching engagement.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of the candidate's pedagogical, administrative, scientific, and applied activities, I consider that **KRUM HRISTOV HRISTOV** meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), its Implementing Regulations, and the Regulations of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv as he meets and significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements, possesses an established profile in the scientific specialty, carries out active project and international activities, and demonstrates sustainable development as a lecturer and researcher.

This gives me sufficient grounds to evaluate his overall performance **POSITIVELY**.

I propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury vote positively and that the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics at the Agricultural University – Plovdiv elect Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Krum Hristov Hristov to the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agriculture)".

20.02.2026

Sofia

**Reviewer:** .....

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Zlatinov/