

OPINION

From: Assoc. Prof. Lyubka Mincheva Ilieva, PhD, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov, Department of Tourism Economics and Management, professional field: 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

Subject: competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)" at the Department of Tourism Economics and Management (State Gazette, issue 113/23.12.2025) at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

1. Candidate presentation

Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Krasimirova Todorova, PhD is the only candidate participating in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)", announced for the needs of the Department of Tourism Economics and Management at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

The required documents and supporting evidence have been submitted in accordance with the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

2. Grounds for writing the opinion

This opinion has been prepared on the basis of Order No. 140/19.02.2026 of the Rector of the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov for the appointment of a Scientific Jury, and Protocol No. 1 of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury held on 02.03.2026.

The opinion is in compliance with the requirements of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov. It also follows the recommended structure for opinions prepared by members of scientific juries for the academic position of "Associate Professor".

3. Personal characteristics of the candidate

Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Krasimirova Todorova, PhD graduated from Tsar Simeon the Great Secondary School, Plovdiv, with a specialization in "Small and medium business manager". In 2008, she obtained a Bachelor's degree in Finance, and

in 2009 a Master's degree in Banking Management at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

In 2016, she was awarded the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty “Economics and Management” (Trade), after successfully defending a dissertation entitled “Management of Trade Credit by Enterprises in the Furniture Sector”.

Following additional training, she has acquired professional qualifications in “Research Methodology” (2013), “Web 2.0 Tools for E-Learning” (2014), “Organization and Management of a Commercial Enterprise” (2020), and “Teacher of Economics” (2024).

Her professional career began in 2008 at Alfa Bank – Bulgaria branch, where she worked until 2014. From 2016 to 2019, she held the position of Assistant, and since 2019 she has been Head Assist. Prof. at the Department of Tourism Economics and Management at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov. In parallel, she was a part-time lecturer at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv (2018–2020).

In addition to her academic career, since 2023 she has been working as a consultant at Amavi Travel Ltd., and since 2022 she has been an evaluator at the Scientific Research Fund.

4. Overall (quantitative and qualitative) assessment of teaching activity

Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Todorova, PhD has a consistently developed teaching career at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov, fully aligned with the profile of the competition. She teaches in both Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes and delivers lectures and seminars in a wide range of disciplines, including “Tour Operator, Agent and Transport Activities”, “Innovations in Tourism”, “Economics of Tourism”, “Tourist Destinations”, “Tourism Management”, “Logistics Systems in Tourism”, “Organizational Structures in Tourism”, “Tourist Animation”, “Property Management in Tourism”, “Organization and Technology of Tourist Services”, “Hotel Business Organization”, “Tourism Business Evaluation”, “Tourist Guiding”, and “Competitiveness of the Tourism Business”.

She also develops and delivers courses at the Centre for Professional Training at the Academy and contributes to curriculum development in several tourism-related disciplines.

Her work with students includes participation in joint research activities, contributing to the practical orientation and quality of education. Overall, her teaching demonstrates solid academic preparation, extensive experience, and high competence in the field of tourism.

5. General (quantitative and qualitative) assessment of research activity

Quantitative assessment: A total of 28 scientific publications have been submitted for participation in the competition, of which 1 independent monograph directly related to the subject of the competition, 3 contributions in collective monographs, and 2 studies relevant to the professional field 3.8 “Economics”, scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism)”.

The submitted scientific works include: 1 independent monograph – habilitation thesis, 1 monograph based on a defended dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree “doctor”, 2 independent chapters in a collective monograph, 2 chapters in collective monographs, 2 collective studies in English, 12 scientific articles in English published in scientific publications referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases (Scopus and Web of Science), and 9 articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or in edited collective volumes. Of the reviewed publications, 4 are independent and 18 are in English. The candidate has also submitted authorship participation in 8 academic textbooks, two of which are independent.

The candidate meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of “Associate Professor” under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. In group of indicators A, indicator 1, she has 50 points (required: 50 points); in group of indicators B, indicator 3, she has 100 points (required: 100 points); in group of indicators Γ, the sum of indicators from 4 to 10 is 298.17 points (required: 200 points); in group of indicators Δ, the sum of indicators is 180 points (required: 50 points). With a required minimum of 400 points, the candidate has achieved a total of 628.17 points.

Qualitative assessment: The scientific interests of Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Todorova, PhD are focused on current and significant issues in tourism theory and practice, related to innovation, digital transformation, sustainable development, competitiveness of the tourism business, and the recovery of the tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The habilitation thesis entitled “Tour operatorship based on innovation: new approaches and perspectives in contemporary tourism management” comprises 232 pages and examines the transformation of tour operator activity in the context of digitalization, changing consumer preferences, and the sustainable development of the tourism business. In this work, the author synthesizes and empirically tests a model for assessing and enhancing the effectiveness of innovations in tour operator activity, substantiating the role of artificial intelligence, big data, and digital platforms for the personalization of tourism services and the enhancement of the competitiveness of tour operators.

The scientific publications of Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Todorova, PhD are characterized by clearly expressed thematic consistency, methodological soundness, and relevance of the researched issues. They cover key aspects of contemporary tourism

management, related to innovation, digitalization, sustainable development, and the adaptation of the tourism sector to a dynamic external environment.

A significant part of the articles, published in scientific publications referenced and indexed in international databases (Scopus and Web of Science), analyze the role of technological innovations as a factor for the sustainable management of tourism organizations, deriving specific relationships between the implementation of innovations, operational effectiveness, and the competitiveness of the tourism business.

In publications addressing the impact of external crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, an analytical and situational approach is applied to examine changes in tourism demand and consumer behaviour, on the basis of which well-grounded recommendations for the recovery and sustainable development of the sector are formulated.

Particular attention is also given to innovative approaches such as gamification in cultural tourism, as well as to the role of events and festivals as a tool for the sustainable development of tourist regions, which contributes to expanding the scope of scientific research in tourism.

The presented publications are of high quality in terms of language, style, and content, and fully comply with the requirements of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

6. Characterization of scientific contributions

The candidate's scientific production presented in the competition contains scientific and applied scientific results that contribute to enriching the existing theoretical knowledge and practice in the field of tourism.

The more significant of them can be systematized as follows:

- The theoretical aspects of innovation and, more specifically, of digital innovation transformation have been systematized for the needs of the strategic management of tourism enterprises for the development of a sustainable tourism business.

- An author's theoretical model for evaluating innovations in tour operator activities has been developed, which encompasses technological, economic, social and environmental dimensions and combines organizational, market and consumer indicators. The model has applied value in the management of tourism organizations.

- The dual perception of technologies and organizational changes in tourism is interpreted – from the side of the tourism enterprise and from the side of the end user. The importance of the balance between the implementation of digital tools in service and the preservation of personalization for a quality user experience, effective market adaptability and sustainable positioning is argued.

- The theory of tourism destination management has been upgraded through the application of a systemic approach combining the interests of all stakeholders – tourists, tourism businesses, public administration and local population. The approach has been tested through research and a comprehensive assessment of the processes of development, sustainability and recovery of tourist destinations, including through research into the impact of external economic and health crises on revenues, employment and regional dynamics using the example of Bulgaria.

- Scientific knowledge on the application of technological, creative and innovative management approaches in tourism has been enriched through the analysis of good practices in the gamification of cultural heritage and the implementation of digital tools to increase visitor engagement and enrich the tourist experience.

7. Academic visibility

The attached citation report certifies that Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Todorova, PhD is a recognizable author in the scientific community. The significance of her research results is evidenced by a total of 12 citations of her scientific works, all of which are in publications referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases (Scopus and Web of Science).

The candidate has participated as an expert in 7 research projects in the period 2017–2025, including the international project “A gamification model for community-based heritage work” (from 01.01.2024 to the present). She has been an academic mentor in both phases of the “Student Internships” project and is currently participating in the project “From Higher Education to Employment”, funded under the Programme “Education 2021–2027”. She has also participated in 7 mobility activities for the purposes of teaching and training in Slovakia, Greece, Romania, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Spain.

Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Todorova, PhD has presented papers and presentations at 12 scientific conferences. She is a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria – Svishtov branch, as well as a member of the editorial board of the scientific journal *Journal of Tourism, Policy and Business (JTPB)*, which attests to her active involvement in the scientific community and her commitment to the development of research activity.

8. Critical notes and recommendations

The reviewed scientific works are of high quality and do not give rise to any significant critical remarks. As a recommendation, I would encourage the candidate to further deepen her research in the field of the economic aspects of the tourism business, with a particular focus on efficiency, profitability, and the sustainable development of tourism enterprises.

9. Summary assessment

The scientific output, teaching activity, and overall academic performance of Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Krasimirova Todorova, PhD provide sufficient grounds for me to express a clear and unequivocal opinion that she fully meets the minimum requirements for holding the academic position of “Associate Professor”, in accordance with the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

On the basis of the above, I confidently propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury and the members of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Industry and Commerce support the candidacy and vote positively for awarding the academic position of “Associate Professor” to Head Assist. Prof. Lyubomira Krasimirova Todorova, PhD in professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism)” at the Department of Tourism Economics and Management at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

06.04.2026
Svishtov

Signature: ...
(Assoc. Prof. Lyubka Ilieva, PhD)