



## СТОПАНСКА АКАДЕМИЯ „Д. А. ЦЕНОВ“ СВИЩОВ

# О P I N I O N

By: *Prof. Margarita Yordanova Bogdanova, PhD*  
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Regarding: Competition for a professorship  
Professional field 3.8. Economy,  
Scientific specialty "Economics and management (agricultural economy)"  
for the needs of the Department of "Agricultural Economics" at the "D. A.  
Tsenov" Academy of Economics, announced in the State Gazette, №  
21/07.03.2023

### **1. Information for the professorship competition**

The opinion is based on Order No. 363 /02.05.2023 of the Rector of the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics, determining the members of the scientific jury for the competition and Protocol 1/15.05.2023 of the first meeting of the scientific jury to determine the members who will develop reviews and opinions.

The competition for a professor in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences", professional field 3.8. Economics, Scientific specialty "Economics and management (agricultural economy)" was announced in SG, no. 21/07.03.2023 for the needs of the Department of "Agricultural Economics" at the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics.

The only candidate under it is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marina Angelova Nikolova. She has duly deposited the required documents according to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Academy of Economics. No violations were registered in the procedure. The candidate has met the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the additional requirements under Art. 129, para. 2 of Regulations for the development of the academic staff in the Academy of Economics, collecting a total of 1169 points out of the required 550.

### **2. Information for the candidate in the competition**

The candidate for the competition - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marina Angelova Nikolova, graduated in 1988 from Higher Agricultural Institute "Vasil Kolarov" - Plovdiv, and in 2004 - from the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics Svishtov in the Master's program "Economic and Financial Control". She worked as a staff member and agronomist in the town of Lom and as a research assistant at the Agricultural Academy, Sofia, defending her PhD in



## СТОПАНСКА АКАДЕМИЯ „Д. А. ЦЕНОВ“ СВИЦОВ

the scientific specialty "General Agriculture" - in 1999 and acquiring the scientific title of "associate professor" in the scientific specialty "Plant breeding" (01.04.14). Since 2006, she has been an associate professor at the Academy of Economics, in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Since 2016, she is the head of the department.

### **3. Quantitative and qualitative assessment of teaching work**

Marina Nikolova is a teacher with nearly 18 years of experience as an associate professor at the Academy of Economics, preceded by serious research experience as a research assistant at the Academy of Agriculture.

The educational activity of the candidate is closely related to the subject of the present competition. The teaching activity of Assoc. Dr. Marina Nikolova is characterized by the following main moments, for which there are concrete evidences:

- The candidate teaches courses related to the subject of the competition, namely: "Introduction to Agribusiness", "Economics of Agrarian Enterprise", "Rural and Agrarian Tourism" (in Bulgarian and in English), "Rural development", "Agrarian entrepreneurship", "Environmental and sustainable development of the agricultural company", etc.
- Curricula and study materials have been developed for the taught disciplines, which are updated annually.
- Working with students and PhD students in various aspects of teaching and assessment.
- Participation in examination committees for semester examinations
- Scientific supervision of 7 successfully defended PhD students, of which 3 – in joint scientific supervision.

My final assessment is that the applicant's methodical and teaching activities, as an academic teacher, author of lecture courses and curricula, textbooks, supervisor of graduates and PhD students, in terms of quantity, quality and structure fully meet the regulatory requirements for holding the academic position of "professor".

### **4. General evaluation of the candidate's research (creative) activity and research**

The scientific research activity (after the first habilitation) submitted for evaluation under the competitive procedure covers a total of 51 publications from various scientific genres, meeting the current academic standards in the country and the university.

They are distributed as follows:

- Monographs – 2, one of which – co-written
- Studios – 5, of which 3 – co-written
- Scientific articles in refereed publications – 10, of which 4 – co-written
- Scientific publications in publications referenced or indexed in the world



## СТОПАНСКА АКАДЕМИЯ „Д. А. ЦЕНОВ“ СВИЦОВ

databases Scopus and/or Web of Science – 5, of which 5 co-written

- Reports from conferences – 16, of which 1 co-written
- Textbooks – 13, of which 9 co-written.

Thematically, the publications cover the classic thematic fields of the scientific specialty of the competition.

The deposited publications are developed both by the author and in co-authorship, which should be evaluated positively, in the context of teamwork. The monographs, studies and articles are published in academic publishing houses and specialized journals with a reputation, and scientific reports in thematic scientific collections with editorial boards. They have been presented at prestigious scientific conferences with international participation.

The presented analytical information about the scientific production, including scientific and scientific-applied developments, is proof of the correct public disclosure to the scientific community of the author's research results in the field of the competition. In their entirety, they cover the requirements of the Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation in the Republic of Bulgaria for the occupation of the academic position "professor".

In accordance with the information from the attached Report on the implementation of the national, minimum scientometric requirements for the occupation of the academic position "professor" in the professional field "Economics", by virtue of Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (Article 2b) and the Rules for its application, Associate Professor Nikolova reports a total 1269 points. On the basis of the submitted scientific production and academic activities for the competition, the cumulative number of points on the metric indicators exceeds nearly 2.5 times the minimum required number (table 1). My conclusion is that the individual groups of metric indicators and national criteria for the overall, quantitative assessment of the scientific value of the publications and academic activity have been applied correctly.

**Table 1**

**Compliance with the national minimum scientometric requirements and the requirements of the Regulations of the Academy of Economics for publications and scientific activity for the position of "professor"**

A group of indicators	Content	Professor	Candidate Contribution
A	Indicator 1	50	50
Б	Indicator 2	-	-
В	Indicator 3	100	100
Г	Sum of indicators from 4 to 10	200	355
Д	Sum of indicators from 11 to 13	100	255
Е	Sum of the indicators from 14	100	509



## СТОПАНСКА АКАДЕМИЯ „Д. А. ЦЕНОВ“ СВИЩОВ

	to the end		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>1269</b>

The main habilitation work of the candidate is dedicated to organic agriculture. This is an in-depth study of the state of the sector, which covers the main challenges facing it and at the same time brings out proposals for improving the competitiveness of farms and their long-term sustainability. The research is multidisciplinary in nature, covering the principles, methods, organization and prospects for the development of organic agriculture, refracted through the author's personal view on the debatable issues of the management of the sector. The in-depth approach, the thorough and reasoned exposition of theses, the excellent mastery of the material and all the complex terminology of the subject of research, the knowledge of the achievements of many other authors in the field and the critical interpretation of their opinions are evident.

No less interesting for the readers is the candidate's second monograph, dedicated to the utilization of plant biomass through the production of heat and electricity (potential and efficiency assessment). Different estimates of biomass potential were successively examined and the theoretical and realistic biomass capacity of cereal crops in the Svishtov region was determined. In both monographic studies, the personal style of Assoc. Prof. Nikolova is present, who establishes herself as a consistent and competent author in the field of organic agriculture.

The other works of the candidate for the academic position of "professor" are related to: the development of rural tourism (2.1.), opportunities for the formation of an agrarian tourism product in Bulgaria (2.2.), bioproduction and peculiarities of the market of bioproducts (2.3.), which work builds on the scientific achievements in the monographs, the problems of the sustainable development of agrarian business in Bulgaria (2.4.), integrated production in the agricultural sector (2.5.), etc.

Some of these publications partially overlap texts from the monographs. Nevertheless, I accept these works as part of the list of publications, as I find that in this way the author has built on his ideas and achievements in the field of management, presented them to a different audience and reached a larger number of readers. Proof of this is the fact that a large part of the publications was presented at national and international scientific conferences, incl. and in English.

The candidate's publications are of serious weight and cover a variety of thematic areas of agrarian economics. Assoc. Prof. Marina Nikolova demonstrates excellent knowledge of the theoretical and normative side of fundamental statements in the researched fields and possesses the skills to interpret them purposefully.

It is also clear from the presented references that the candidate has participated in research projects (21 in total), incl. an international one. She is head of a project under contract with the "National Scientific Research" fund. She initiated and participated as an expert and consultant in a number of scientific and applied developments.



## СТОПАНСКА АКАДЕМИЯ „Д. А. ЦЕНОВ“ СВИЩОВ

The scientific works submitted for review do not repeat those presented in previous competition, which is certified by the list of publications submitted by the candidate for registration in the NACID for the academic position "associate professor" in professional direction 3.8. Economy.

### 4. Scientific contributions

As the candidate has declared, the scientific contributions in the publications of the competition can be divided into several thematic subgroups. In my opinion, they are 3 subgroups: 1) aimed at sustainable development and management of agrarian business and rural areas, 2) organic farming (in its economic and management context), 3) alternative tourism - as a collective concept of various forms of tourism outside the "traditional". The fourth group, declared by the author, is a summary of the candidate's contribution to the training of students and PhD students in "Agricultural Economics", which is a permanent task and has a rather horizontal character, insofar as all publications contribute to training.

Some more important **theoretical and practical scientific contributions**:

**A.** Research and implementation of integrated approaches to improve the management of agricultural business, based on the paradigm of sustainable development, with a focus on its long-term prosperity and efficiency in taking care of the interests of all stakeholders.

The issues of integration in management are among the most relevant - not only in the field of agricultural business. They require specific skills to analyze, as the barriers to their study are much more complex. That is why integration, complementarity and cohesion between different management tools have huge potential and deserve admiration.

More specifically, in my opinion, the following can stand out in this direction:

- the in-depth assessment of trends in the agriculture, main challenges and on this basis - some solutions that can contribute to mastering the most critical trends.
- Innovative practices in the sector that have the potential for sustainability and added value.
- The development of rural areas, incl. the new typology of regions and the development of LAG - as one of the most complex issues of an integration nature, as it combines regional with sectoral development.

**B.** Development of the direction "sustainable development of agricultural business" in the preparation of highly qualified personnel in modern agriculture. I find the claims of the candidate to establish a scientific school at the Department of "Agricultural Economics" in the field of organic farming, regulation and stimulation of the conditions for environmentally friendly business in the agrarian sector, ecological entrepreneurship to be well founded.

- A comparison of organic and conventional farming systems and an argumentative case for the advantages of the former.
- Development of sustainable models for nature use.



## СТОПАНСКА АКАДЕМИЯ „Д. А. ЦЕНОВ“ СВИЦОВ

- Research on the market of organic products, which, like all emerging markets, needs specialized research and process monitoring in the pursuit of finding appropriate regulatory instruments for balanced development.

C. Study of the contribution of rural, incl. agricultural and ecological tourism for the diversification of the rural economy and the creation of unique tourist products, as well as the interrelationship of agriculture - tourism to increase the competitiveness of the local economy. As the candidate states, the results are implemented in academic curricula and courses.

- Critical analysis of the state and prospects for the development of rural tourism in Bulgaria, empirical comparison of approaches to solving problems in countries with experience in the development of rural tourism, empirical assessment of market and entrepreneurial niches for the development of rural tourism, assessment of the readiness of agricultural farms and the population in rural areas for the development of rural tourism.
- The integrating potential of the interrelationship between tourism and agriculture has been explored.
- A model for the sustainable development of ecotourism has been proposed, as a possibility for implementation in a local or regional scope.

In the reference to the minimum requirements are indicated:

- 7 citations in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes.
- 15 citations in monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes.

By number of points, they exceed the requirements for the corresponding group of indicators. The citations are in both Bulgarian and English publications, which shows the wide popularity of the candidate's works.

From a linguistic point of view, all publications follow the generally accepted academic style and scientific language

I have every reason to believe that the publications and scientific works of Associate Professor Nikolova submitted for evaluation are original and are the candidate's personal work.

### **6. Admitted weaknesses, critical remarks, recommendations.**

I have no significant critical comments and recommendations for the candidate.

### **7. Conclusion**

In summary of what has been said so far, and evaluating the candidate based on the



## СТОПАНСКА АКАДЕМИЯ „Д. А. ЦЕНОВ“ СВИЩОВ

totality of the provided documents and author's materials, I can confirm with complete conviction that Associate Professor Dr. Marina Angelova Nikolova meets all the requirements for the occupation of the academic position "professor", according to the Law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at the Academy of Economics "D. A. Tsenov", Svishtov, **I propose that the candidate in the competition Assoc. Prof. Marina Angelova Nikolova, PhD be selected for the academic position of "Professor" in scientific field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and management (agricultural economy)" for the needs of the Department of "Agricultural Economic" at "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics, and I hope that the scientific jury will make a unanimous positive decision on this.**

29.05.2023.  
Svishtov

Opinion author: .....  
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