

## STATEMENT

Regarding the research and teaching activities of **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ginka Mehandzhiyska**, a participant in the competition for the academic position of Professor in the professional field 3.4. Social Activities (Methods of Social Work, Gerontological Social Work)

by **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Silvia Tsvetanska** - Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski", member of the Scientific Committee, appointed by the Rector's decree № RD 38-8/7.01.2021 r. by the Rector of Sofia University

This competition is initiated by the Social Work Department of the Faculty of Pedagogy. The procedure related to its conduct is in full compliance with the Law for Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and with the Regulations for the conditions and the order of acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The only candidate allowed to participate in the competition is Ginka Mehandzhiyska. The candidate has precisely prepared the materials and presented them orderly according to the requirements.

### **Professional profile of the candidate - education, teaching and expert activity**

Ginka Andonova Mehandzhiyska was born in 1970 and graduated from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She has master's degrees in Pedagogy (1993) and Psychology (1997). In 2004 she acquired the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The professional path of Ginka Mehandzhiyska is affiliated with the Faculty of Pedagogy of Sofia University, where she is part of the academic staff of the Department of Social Work. As a university lecturer, she passed through the positions of assistant, senior assistant and chief assistant and currently holds the academic position of "Associate Professor" (since 2009). Her habilitation is in the professional field of Pedagogy, but the specific field of specialization refers to Social Activities and is related to methods of social work and supervision in social work. These are also the areas in which Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska leads lecture courses. She teaches disciplines that significantly contribute to the formation of professional competence of students majoring in Social Activities. The curricula developed by her on Methods of social work; Supervision in social work; Social work interviewing techniques; Gerontological social work, contains an innovative interpretation of issues that constitute the core of social work as a practice and as an academic preparation.

Along with her teaching commitment, Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska demonstrates activity both as a researcher and an expert. Since taking up the academic position of "Associate Professor", she

has participated as a team member on 9 research projects, three of which are international. She was the supervisor of two successful PhD candidates. She has participated in postgraduate training for practitioners. Her expertise in the field of social work is evident from her participation in two editorial boards of scientifically peer-reviewed publications, as well as from her inclusion in working groups at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and expert groups for accreditation at the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency.

The professional biography of the candidate shows a consistent upgrade of knowledge and experience and a clear profile in the field of social work. Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska is a well-established specialist with her own style and way of working and her name is associated with the development of methods of social work and gerontological social work - areas in which the said competition is announced. The overall review of the competition materials leaves a positive impression of a successful symbiosis between professional training, teaching experience and results in the research activities of the candidate, which correspond highly to the profile of the competition.

### **General record and description of scholarly publications**

According to the information provided, the applicant not only meets the minimum national requirements, but also significantly exceeds them. The distribution by groups of indicators is as follows:

- 50 points per group of indicators A;
- 100 points per group of indicators C;
- 522.5 points per group of indicators D;
- 930 points per group of indicators E;
- 357.85 points per group of indicators F.

Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska is participating in the competition with a total of 41 publications, 8 of which in a foreign language. The publications correspond to the topic of the competition and show a great variety: 2 monographs (one of which has the character of a habilitation thesis); 3 chapters from books; 3 teaching and methodical aids; 4 studies and 29 articles, one of which in a scientific journal, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases.

### **Substantive scope of scientific achievements**

The scientific papers submitted for participation in the competition reflect the candidate's own vision on the affected aspects of social work. A very large part of them are self-published results, which show the author's position and contribution. To a certain extent, the publications complement each other in terms of content and create a complete picture of the research territory in which the author's searches are located.

I dare to emphasize the importance of the two monographs - "Social work with individual clients" and "On the nature and classifications of social work methods", which mostly carry the author's messages about the theory and methodology of social work.

In the monograph "Social work with individual clients" Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska combines the results of theoretical and empirical research to develop her idea of the specific application of social work methods at each stage of the work process in the case of the individual client. This extensive, process-oriented tracking of methods is based on a clearly defined conceptual framework of social work with individual clients. Thus, the methods are included in a broader theoretical and methodological interpretation of individualization in the helping process. The author's attention is focused mainly on two methods - case work and individual counseling, which are the most typical for social work with individual clients.

In the other monograph, devoted entirely to the systematization of methods in social work, the methods are presented through definition and classification, highlighting their specificity for the needs of the practical implementation of helping relationships. Through this monographic study Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska achieves an important result from a scientific point of view - the emancipation of social work from other helping professions. The substantiation of the social work' methodological apparatus helps to clarify the status of social work and her professional identification.

The publications of a methodological nature (publ. № 4 and № 6) are of interest as well. Through them, the research territory is expanded to include methodological guidelines for the provision of social services. The relationship social worker - client - environment is considered and attention is paid to the construction of a supportive environment in the institutions providing social services. The textbook called "Methodology of home visits in social work" summarizes practical guidelines for working with the client in a home environment, giving specific recommendations, compliance with which would make the visit of a social worker effective. This practical tool, as well as the other dedicated to occupational therapy (publication № 7), has value for the training of students in social work and the continuing qualification of practicing social workers.

### **Scientific contributions**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ginka Mehandzhiyska has differentiated her contributions in four areas - methodology and methods of social work; gerontological social work; social work education (with a focus on preparing social workers to practice gerontological social work); psychosocial occupational therapy. The relevant publications are also correctly defined, which confirm the indicated systematization. I support the outlined areas, believing that the most significant scientific achievements of the candidate are in two of the thematic fields, namely: methods of social work and gerontological social work. Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska has her own contribution to the enrichment of the theory and methodology of social work by defining and

classifying the methods of social work. In addition, she argues her theoretical and methodological interpretation of the application of methods for working with individual clients. In this way, social work, in addition to being a field of application, is established at the conceptual level with its distinctive methodology, on the basis of which models for practical actions can be developed. In her scientific texts, Assoc. Prof. Mehandzhiyska convincingly presents the theory - practice relation that is extremely important for social work. She shows the applied significance of each concept she describes in the process of real work with clients. At the same time, transitions are being made to the training of social workers, approaches for training students are being clarified, which also contributes to the direction of social work education.

I would like to particularly note the candidate's contribution to the theoretical and practical development of the issue of gerontological social work. This is a little researched, but very topical area in which there is a growing need to establish modern approaches to the provision of social services. In this regard, Ginka Mehandzhiyska's field research activity is notably valuable. The research results she achieves contribute to the creation of models and programs for working with the elderly and old people, through which to improve the offered social services. The approved author's tools "Model of an individual plan for support and care of services users in gerontological social work" and "Scale for social activity" and "Scale for assessing the satisfaction with the quality of life" of the elderly are also contributing.

In her research work Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska achieves a homogeneity balance between the conceptualization of the methodology and methods of social work and their design for the needs of the practice and the training of social workers.

### **Notes and recommendations**

I have no questions, remarks or recommendations to the candidate. With Assoc. Prof. Ginka Mehandzhiyska, we work together in the Department of Social Work and I have had the opportunity to share and discuss with her more than once on professional topics. My personal impressions of her work are entirely positive. She treats her commitments responsibly, is consistent and thorough when performing various tasks - whether research-related or organizational. Her personal commitment to the idea of enriching the theory and practice of social work motivates both professionals and students she teaches.

### **Conclusion**

After getting acquainted in detail with the documents on the competition and the scientific achievements of the candidate, I confidently give my positive assessment of the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ginka Mehandzhiyska. She has professional maturity and skills for research in the field of the competition. Her contribution as a lecturer for the establishment of the university

specialty Social Activities is also obvious. I recommend to the respected members of the scientific jury to support the choice and to propose to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pedagogy of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" to choose Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ginka Mehandziyska to take the academic position of "Professor" in a professional field 3.4. Social Activities (Methods of social work, Gerontological social work).

Sofia, April 16, 2021

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Silvia Tsvetanska