



REVIEW

From Prof. Dr. Sc. PhD. Sonia Varadinova Mileva-Bojanova,

Regarding: the scientific, scientific-applied and professional-academic activity and production presented by the participants in the competition as announced in SG No. 30 of 15.04.2022 in a competition for the occupation of the academic position "Associate Professor" in the professional field PN 3.8. Economics (Corporate sustainability and responsibility - in Bulgarian and English).

Single candidate: Chief Assistant PhD Marina Dimitrova Stefanova

This review was prepared in connection with Order No. RD-38-273/06.06.2022 of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the appointment of a scientific jury and is in accordance with the requirements of Art. 24 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, art. 53 of the Regulations for its Application and the Regulations for the Terms and Procedures for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Occupying Academic Positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

I. Assessment of compliance with minimum national requirements

The candidate has fulfilled the requirements of Art. 26 par. 1 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as follows:

For group A, indicator 1: Marina Stefanova holds Diploma No. SU 2016-102 dated 30.06.2016 for the awarded educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 3.7 "Administration and management" and scientific specialty "Social management" based on dissertation "Factors for implementation of corporate social responsibility in Bulgarian small and medium-sized enterprises" (50 points).

For group B, indicator 3: A habilitation work has been deposited - a monograph with the author Stefanova M. "Reporting on the sustainability of enterprises. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Aspects of Their Business", Volume: 214 pp., Ed. SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2022 and reviewers: Assoc. Prof. Marcelen Yovogan and Assoc. Prof. Atanas Georgiev, ISBN 978-954-9399-73-8. (100 points).

For group D, the candidate declared 210 points out of the required 200. According to indicator 5, a book was presented based on a defended dissertation - "Corporate social responsibility in Bulgarian small and medium-sized enterprises", UI "St. Kliment Ohridski" (ISBN:978-954-9399-57-8) with a volume of 234 pages, reviewers Prof. DrSc Zhelyu Vladimirov and Assoc. Prof. Atanas Georgiev (75 points).

For indicator 6: Articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information, 2 publications are presented,

incl. one co-authored and one individual. For the co-authored publication, a separation protocol for 50% participation of the authors is presented. A check in the Scopus and NACID databases shows that the publications in question are referenced and indexed, but they are included as book chapters (a total of 30 items) and not as articles, reports, referenced and indexed in global databases (with a total of 45 points). Respectively, for group D, instead of 210 points as declared, it would be correct to recognize 195 points of required 200 points. According to indicator 7, in total 5 articles and reports are presented in non-refereed editions with scientific review or edited collective volumes (50 points). According to indicator 10, the candidate participates with two chapters in collective monographs, one in Bulgarian and the other in English (40 points).

For group D, indicator 11, according to a reference of noticed citations, evidence is presented for 3 citations¹ (45 points). According to indicator 12, evidence was presented for 1 quote (10 points). Total for group D – 55 points.

In total, for all groups A-D, the candidate collects exactly 400 points, which are required by law. The candidate meets all the requirements under Art. 105 para. 1 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". She was appointed to labor relations at SU St. Cl. Ohridski in the position of "chief assistant", effective from 09.11.2020 (Certificate No. 155/06.06.2022 from the Human Resources Department of SU). NBU from 2013 (Official note, Human Resources Department, Ex. No. 57/07.06.2021 Based on the presented evidence, it can be concluded that the candidate Ch. assistant professor Marina Stefanova, PhD, meets the minimum requirements for holding the academic position of "associate professor" according to Art. 2b para. 2 and 3 of Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

II. Research activity and results

2.1. Evaluation of the monographic work

In the announced competition for "associate professor", the candidate is the only participant. Participated with habilitation work (Group B, indicator No. 3), published as a monograph - "Reporting on the sustainability of enterprises. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) aspects of their business'. Structurally, the monograph is composed of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion, appendices and a bibliography. In the first three chapters, a historical overview and the development of the idea of sustainability reporting (information sources, indicators, and assessment) are made. A literature review of world and national studies is also presented. The content and results of the study are presented in chapter four. Includes results of secondary data processing of annual reports for 2017-2018. The author adapted a methodology of the Ministry of Finance of the Dutch government to promote and unify corporate transparency. The methodology used is a combination of individual assessment cards (172 indicators) for each enterprise from the sample and averaging the results of two or three assessors (with a difference of 10% or 12%). These individual assessments are combined with the Transparency Standard (2018) and a self-assessment questionnaire in three main blocks of questions (company and business model, policies and results, management approach)

¹ As of 04.07.2022 A total of 6 citations are registered in the Scopus database, per chapter from a 2015 co-authored book

with a total of 120 points. The review of secondary information covers the periods 1.08-15.11.2019 and 1.03-15.08.2021. The sample includes a total of 67 enterprises with 500+ insured persons. The scoring and evaluation work itself was the result of a collaborative effort by a team of seven researchers, making it difficult to distinguish the personal contribution of the candidate.

Contributions as indicated by the applicant in a reference to the original scientific contributions, especially those of a theoretical nature related to outline, overview, review and others, are not accepted. The contributions can be summarized as mainly scientific-applied and practical-applied and more specifically in the field of reporting the sustainability of enterprises in Bulgaria. The methodology is borrowed, taking into account the main standards and principles for sustainability reporting, as applied and tested in Bulgaria, covering two consecutive years (2017-2018), based on which the author's conclusions and conclusions for improved sustainability reporting are made.

As critical remarks, I would point out the lack of sufficient information about the observations, collected information and data processing and the declared methodology adapted by the author, and more specifically the content analysis. A SWOT analysis is incomplete, being limited mainly to strengths and weaknesses. Contribution expectations have a fifth chapter aimed at improving sustainability reporting are not met, and reference is made to the general theoretical and legislative framework, a roadmap for the introduction of sustainability reporting standards in the EU, etc.

Regardless of the critical remarks, the monograph is a serious study and addition to the studies dedicated to the reporting of the sustainability of enterprises in Bulgaria for the period 2017-2018.

2.2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other presented publications

Two publications - book chapters published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in Scopus are presented, including one in co-authorship (No. 6.1), for which a separation protocol is presented, and one independent (No. 6.2), (Group D, indicator 6).

In publication No. 6.1 (2015) the general context of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Bulgaria is outlined, the prepared national strategy is analysed, and policies and practices in the field of CSR are reviewed. It is included as a chapter of a book indexed in Scopus in the Eastern Europe section.

Publication No. 6.2 (2021) is a book chapter dedicated to Bulgaria and employer preferences for CSR in the context of Eastern European countries. The focus is on youth job seekers and the importance of CSR for their career choices. The publication is part of a project.

In group D, indicator 7 "Articles and reports in non-refereed publications with scientific review", 5 articles and reports are presented. Of them, 4 are in English, including conference papers 3, the remaining 2 are journal articles.

Publication No. 7.1 (2020) is a paper presented at an international conference looking at leadership as part of organizational sustainability. Includes an overview of some leading theoretical models that have been tested with a representative sample of business leaders under pandemic conditions. As a result, the main characteristics of CSR leadership have been identified.

Publication No. 7.2 (2019) examines organizational change through the lens of CSR professionals. The main contribution is the attempt to outline the profile of CSR specialists in Bulgaria.

Publication No. 7.3 (2015) is entirely theoretical and reviews the cooperation of the UN and the private sector, incl. the possibilities of a number of international business development initiatives.

Publication No. 7.4 (2014) is the result of a project implemented in 2013 dedicated to children and the usefulness of their parents' work. The main contribution is an empirical study conducted among 420 children, in 12 pilot companies, and the assessment through a standardized questionnaire of HR experts from these same pilot companies. Due to the fact that the results in the publication are part of a project, it is difficult to determine and distinguish the personal involvement and contribution of the applicant.

Publication No. 7.5 (2013) is a report presented at a conference dedicated to trends and social investments, campaigns and social programs of mining companies in Bulgaria. The contributions are in challenging the current investment evaluation mechanism and the need for improvements in the approach of mining companies to the communities in the country.

In group D, indicator 10, the candidate participates with two chapters in collective monographs, one in Bulgarian (No. 10.1) and another in English (No. 10.2).

Publication No. 10.1 (2017) there is some thematic overlap with the PhD thesis, the empirical study conducted and the factors for implementing CSR in SMEs.

Publication No. 10.2 (2019) is a book chapter dedicated to a specific case study - CSR on the example of Overgaz. It includes topics related to the theory of human capital development, as the object of research is a specific company and the applied model for responsible business.

The publications presented for review demonstrate consistent layering and deepening on the topic of sustainability, CSR and development in Bulgaria. Such issues related to the profile of CSR specialists, specifics in some industries (mining industry), leadership and others are also affected. There is an overlap, even partial, with the topic of the PhD thesis, which is a logical extension of the larger topic of sustainable management. All of the applicant's publications are in peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes. No violations, plagiarism or unreliability of the presented scientific data were found in the publications submitted for evaluation.

2.3. Citation by other authors.

The presented reference for noticed citations confirms 15 citations in monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes, incl. in 7 doctoral dissertations, which should be reduced. In total 8 citations are accepted.

The reference also includes 19 citations in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals, including 16 in Bulgarian. Citations in a master's thesis, dissertation (2 citations) should be reduced. In total 17 citations are accepted.

A significant part of the citations are of publication under No. 6.1, which is a co-authorship. A Scopus reference confirms 6 citations to this publication.

2.4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice.

The candidate has participated in two research projects that resulted in scientific results under the EU-funded COST program indirectly related to the current call for docent. The first project (2018-2021) COST Action 17114 is dedicated to finding solutions to cross-sectoral youth disadvantage and the second is dedicated to innovation for social change. There is no data presented about the specific participation and scientific contribution of the candidate in both projects.

2.5. Learning and teaching activity

The candidate actively participates in the development of the curriculum and programs in the MP "Responsible and sustainable management" in the Faculty of Economics of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" (2021-2022). Two individual courses have been developed (Systems and Standards for the Management of Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility and Sustainable Management and Development), as well as one in a team (Ethics in Management). In her capacity as director of the master's program, M. Stefanova also participated in the updating of two more disciplines (Good governance and corporate social responsibility, corporate development, mergers and acquisitions), the latter being worked in a team.

As a doctoral student and part-time teacher in the period 2013-2020, the candidate has a teaching load at the Faculty of Economics of the University of St. Kl. Ohridski" (464 hours), as well as in other universities such as VUZF, Burgas University "Prof. Asen Zlatarov". From 2020 when he starts working at SU, the academic load is 152 hours of classroom work, of which 130 hours are for the academic year 2021/2022. (Information on the circumstances under Art. 112 of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kl. Ohridski").

In the period 2012-2020, the candidate worked actively in a number of internship programs, academies. In 2021, he leads a CSR Career week, together with the Career Center of the Faculty of Economics, ESG Academy, and in 2022 he leads groups of students on a study visit and a group on Sustainable Lifestyle. There is no data for work with Erasmus students.

2.6. Administrative and public activity

Marina Stefanova is the director of the MP "Responsible and Sustainable Management" at the Faculty of Economics of SU. Head of the project "Sustainability Report of the University of St. Kl. Ohridski 2019-2021".

Actively participates in the preparation of strategic documents and working groups on sustainable development issues for a number of departments, NGOs and other organizations.

In the period 2014-2022, he was a member of a number of juries for awarding various awards in the field of corporate social responsibility. Membership in a number of NGOs, organizations and structures unquestionably confirms the active public activity on CSR issues.

III. Personal impressions of the candidate

I know Marina Stefanova personally as a member of the Department of Economics and Management by Industry. I can confirm her activity regarding a number of initiatives and public activity on the topic of CSR and sustainable development in many different initiatives, incl. the confirmation and enhancement of the authority of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" and Faculty of Economics in the field of CSR.

IV. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activity and achievements of the candidate

My main recommendation is to activate publication activity in articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases. Deepening and expanding personal contributions at the theoretical level, research in the field of sustainable development.

In **conclusion**, the candidate meets the minimum requirements under Art. 24, paragraph 1, 27 (4) item 1 and item 2 of Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and of Art. 53 (1) and (2) and 57 (2) items 1 and 2 of the Rules for implementation of the law on the development of the academic staff in the republic of Bulgaria, as well as the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

This gives me the reason to give my positive assessment for the candidate Ch. assistant professor, Dr. Marina Dimitrova Stefanova, for taking up the academic position of "associate professor" in the professional field PN 3.8. Economics (Corporate sustainability and responsibility - in Bulgarian and English).

20.08.2022

Reviewer:

Prof. Dr. Sc PhD Sonia Mileva