

To:
Scientific Jury
Determined by Order РД 38-197/ 23.04.2021 г.
of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

STATEMENT

from: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Simeonova Petkova
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Geology and Geography, Geography of
Tourism Department

About: Competition for the acquisition of the academic position of professor in the
professional field of 3.9. Tourism (Development of tourism destinations)

The statement is prepared according to the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (RIDASRB) and the Rules on Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Information about the competition

The competition for the academic position of professor at the Faculty of Geology and Geography (GGF) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in professional field 3.9. Tourism (Development of tourism destinations) is announced in SG, issue 22 / 16.03. 2021. I participate in the scientific jury of the competition, according to the Order of the Rector of Sofia University.

Information about the candidate in the competition

The only candidate in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Atanasova Assenova. She has graduated with a Master's degree in Geography, majoring in Territorial Organization of Tourism and Recreation and a second major - English at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova has received a degree of a specialist in higher education: Marketing, Advertising and Business Communication from the University of National and World Economy. She has acquired an educational and scientific degree Doctor of scientific specialty 3.9. Tourism (Geography of recreation and tourism).

In the period 1994-2017 Assoc. Prof. Dr. Assenova has participated in 8 specializations and short-term trainings organized by international organizations and educational institutions. She has certificates of participation. She is fluent in English and Russian.

Her professional development has started at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Geography of Tourism Department, where she has consequently held the positions of assistant, senior assistant, chief assistant and currently she is an associate professor.

Since 2015, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova has been the Department Head and since 2019 she has held the position of Deputy Dean for Master's and Doctoral Programs.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova has also taught classes in the field of tourism at the International Business School - Botevgrad, and at the New Bulgarian University.

She has held senior positions in Ministries, agencies and organizations - as Deputy Minister, Chairman of Councils and Director. She was responsible for tourism policy, international cooperation and national marketing and advertising in the field of tourism. She has participated in the preparation of evaluations of projects in the field of tourism, in the development and organization of programs for tourists, in the management of tourist activities

and in the management of a tourist complex. She has also participated in working groups and in a tourism council. In this way, she has gained extensive professional experience in the field of tourism related to the management and development of tourism destinations.

In 2021. she is a member of a professional organization - EuroCHRIE.

Fulfillment of the requirements for holding the academic position

The candidate in the competition meets the mandatory conditions and requirements of LDASRB and RIDASRB, as well as the Rules on Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" with regards to the holding of the academic position of Professor.

- The candidate in the competition Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova has obtained the educational and scientific degree of doctor of 3.9 Tourism (Geography of Recreation and Tourism) in 2012 for the defense of a dissertation thesis on the topic: "Methodology for monitoring sustainable tourism development (case study of the municipality of Tsarevo)".

- Holds the academic position of Associate Professor in 3.9. Tourism (Development of tourism destinations) at Sofia University more than 2 academic years (since 2013).

- The candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova meets the minimum national requirements and the requirements of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Based on a review of the publications, documents and materials provided by the candidate in the competition Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova for participation in the competition for professor, an assessment of compliance with the scient metrics and indicators and the implementation of the minimum national requirements was made.

For the group of indicators C a habilitation thesis - monograph "Between culture and tourism: tourist attractions based on cultural heritage" with ISBN 978-954-07-5167-2 is presented, in which the author's contribution of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova is 170 pages and it is evaluated with 100 points, while the required minimum is 100 points.

Group of indicators D includes a total of 44 publications with a sum of the total number of 266.3 points, collected from all publications, while the required minimum is 200 points, which are distributed to the individual indicators in that group in the following way: Indicator D-6 (articles and reports published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information) - 5 publications with a total of 55 points; Indicator D-7 (articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or in edited collective/ joined volumes) - 27 publications with a total of 111.6 points; Indicator D-9 (studies published in unrefereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective/ joined volumes) - 9 publications with a total of 69 points; Indicator D-10 (a published chapter of a collective/ joined monograph) - 3 publications with a total of 30.7 points.

Group of indicators E includes a total of 211 citations with a sum of a total number of 1795 points collected from all citations, while the required minimum is 100 points, which are distributed to the individual indicators in the group in the following way: Indicator E-11 (citations or reviews in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes) - 23 citations with a total of 345 points; Indicator E-12 (citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review) - 102 citations with a total of 1020 points; Indicator E-13 (citations or reviews in non-refereed journals with scientific review) - 86 citations with a total of 430 points.

The total number of points for the group of indicators F is 485, while the required minimum is 100 points. The total number of points is distributed to the individual indicators in the group in the following way: Indicator F-15 (management of a doctoral student, who has successfully defended a dissertation thesis) - a total of 160 points for 4 doctoral students, who have successfully defended their dissertation papers for the period 2015-2020; Indicator F-16

(participation in a national scientific or educational project) - a total of 75 points for the participation in 5 national projects; Indicator F-17 (participation in an international scientific or educational project) - a total of 200 points for the participation in 10 international projects; Indicator F-18 (management of a national scientific or educational project) - 30 points for the management of 1 national project; Indicator F-20 (published university textbook or a textbook used in the school network) - 20 points for 1 published textbook.

It can be summarized that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova meets the national requirements for holding the academic position of professor and shows significantly higher values of the groups of indicators D, E and F than the required minimum.

Evaluation of teaching and learning activities

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova is a lecturer in the Geography of Tourism Department at GGF at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for a long time. The disciplines in which she is engaged in the bachelor's degree, full-time education include: Marketing in tourism, Tour operator and agency activities, Tourism destination management, World and regional tourism fairs and exhibitions and Sustainable tourism development - standards and certification. In the master's degree, part-time study, she is engaged in the following disciplines: Agency activities in tourism, Marketing in tourism, Tourism policy, Tourism planning and Tourism destination management. For foreign students of the Erasmus program she teaches three subjects in English: Marketing in tourism, Sustainable tourism development - standards and certification; Tourism destination management. The subjects in which Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova teaches are directly related to the topic of the announced competition.

The number of classes of the candidate during the last five academic years was respectively: 2015/2016 - 572 hours; 2016/2017 - 544 hours; 2017/2018 - 766.5 hours; 2018/2019 - 583.8 hours; and 2019/2020 - 565 hours. The number of classes on average for the period was 606.3 hours, which significantly exceeded the required minimum. The total number of all academic hours of the candidate was respectively: 2015/2016 - 1394 hours; 2016/2017 - 1459.2 hours; 2017/2018 - 1541.1 hours; 2018/2019 - 1002.4 hours; and 2019/2020 - 1305.6 hours. The average number of hours of academic activities for the period was 1340.5 hours.

For the period 2015-2020 Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova was the supervisor of 4 doctoral students who have successfully defended dissertation papers. She was the supervisor of 20 graduates who successfully defended their master thesis for the period 2013-2020. For the period 2020-2021 she was a research mentor of 2 post-doctoral students and of 1 young scientist under the National Program "Young Scientists and Post-Doctoral Students". She participates in the competition with 1 published textbook in a co-authorship.

Evaluation of research activity

For the period 2013-2021 Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova has participated in 50 scientific and professional conferences and forums, of which 32 were held in Bulgaria and 18 - abroad. In 2 of them she has participated with plenary reports. She has participated in 5 university, 10 national and 13 international or a total of 28 scientific, scientific-educational and scientific-applied projects for the period 2013-2021, of 2 of which she was a manager.

For the same period (2013-2021) she participated in the editorial board of 2 international scientific journals and was the editor of 2 collections of papers and 1 edition.

For participation in the competition for professor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova has presented 46 scientific papers, including 1 monograph, 5 articles and reports in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information, 27 articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or in edited collective volumes of papers, 9 studies published in non-refereed journals with scientific review

or in editing collective volumes of papers, 3 chapters of collective monographs and 1 textbook. Of the total number of publications - 8 are independent and 38 are written in co-authorship. 26 of the publications have been published in Bulgarian, the remaining 21 publications are in English (1 publication has been published in both Bulgarian and English).

Brief description of scientific papers and evaluation of scientific contributions

The author's scientific works and the respective contributions of the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova could be classified into several thematic areas as follows:

- (1) Tourist zoning of Bulgaria;
- (2) Sustainable development of tourism;
- (3) Development of tourism at different territorial levels;
- (4) Development of tourism in mountainous territories;
- (5) Development of cultural tourism;
- (6) Marketing of tourist destinations;
- (7) Training in the field of tourism.

Specific contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova can be summarized as:

- Reviewing the evolution of tourist zoning in Bulgaria; proposing a reasoned scheme of potential marketing tourist regions, which subsequently formed the basis of a comprehensive Concept for the tourism zoning of Bulgaria; outlining the basic principles and criteria, as well as approaches and results from the development of a Concept for the tourist zoning of Bulgaria;
- Outlining the benefits of using the European System of Indicators for the Monitoring of Sustainable Tourism Development (ETIS); analyzing the results of the implementation of the application of ETIS system in the Danube region and in Sofia Municipality; estimation of the attitude of the tourism business towards cooperation with local authorities;
- Evaluating the application of the approach for corporate social responsibility in hotels in Bulgaria and developing a case study for the experience regarding the application of the same approach in a specific hotel; outlining the challenges of the introduction of measures for corporate social responsibility in small and medium-sized enterprises (including tourism organizations) in selected European countries (including Bulgaria); analyzing the results of the application of the methodology for resource efficiency and clean production in hotels in the Balkan region; assessing the recreational, scientific and educational ecosystem services, as well as the ecosystem services of the cultural heritage in the urbanized territories of Bulgaria;
- Analyzing the state and development of tourism in Lukovit municipality, Vidin municipality and Strandzha Nature Park; reviewing the process of transformation in the tourism sector in Bulgaria after the changes in political and economic system; analyzing the state of management systems of tourism destinations in Bulgaria as presented on the Internet;
- Reviewing studies of tourism development in the mountainous territories of Bulgaria; identifying models for tourism development in the mountain tourist centers in Bulgaria, as well as in small destinations located in mountainous areas; adapting a model for research of development and management of tourism in mountainous territories; carrying out a comparative analysis of villages located in a mountainous area; analyzing the supply chain and value chain in the process of creating a tourism product in mountainous areas; identifying important challenges to sustainable development of tourism in the mountainous regions of Bulgaria;
- Analyzing the processes of selection and implementation of projects, as well as the spending of European funds to support the development of tourist attractions; revealing the territorial concentration of the tourist demand, analyzing the state of training of the staff and assessing the tourist potential of the cultural heritage sites; offering a methodology for marketing research of specific cultural heritage institutions - museums and galleries;

- Measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of efforts made with regards to the participation in tourism exhibitions and fairs; outlining the possibilities and limitations of gamification and studying the specifics of gamified applications of Sofia as a tourist destination;
- Argumentation of the needs for changes in the curricula and the needs for adaptation of the study objectives in terms of knowledge, skills, competencies and practical training of students specializing in tourism; analyzing the experience in the organization and performance of the internship of tourism students and presenting the approach and results of joint participation of teachers and students from Geography of Tourism Department at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in research projects in the field of tourism.

It can be summarized that the scientific publications and the respective contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova correspond to the topic of the competition. The results of these papers reveal that in-depth and comprehensive territorial studies, with theoretical, methodological and practical significance have been conducted, based on analyzes and assessments, selection of appropriate methodology and tools, and recommendations have been made regarding sustainable and effective management and development of tourist destinations.

Conclusion

Based on the documents and materials submitted for the participation in the competition, I confirm that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Atanasova Assenova meets the mandatory conditions for acquiring the academic position of professor, outlined in the LDASRB, RIDASRB and the Rules on Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The minimum requirements for holding the academic position in the professional field of 3.9. Tourism, are met, as the mandatory minimum for the groups of indicators D, E and F is significantly exceeded. The submitted scientific papers for the participation in the competition contain significant scientific contributions. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Assenova has indisputable merits as a lecturer and as a researcher on the issues of the announced competition. That gives me a reason to declare my positive assessment and with full conviction to vote "FOR" Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Atanasova Assenova to be elected to take the academic position of professor in the professional field 3.9. Tourism (Development of tourism destinations) in Geography of Tourism Department at the Faculty of Geology and Geography of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Sofia, 16.07.2021

Prepared the statement:
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elena Petkova – Member of the Scientific Jury