

## **OPINION**

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**REGARDING:** competition for taking up the academic position "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" in higher education field 7. Healthcare and sport, professional field 7.1 Medicine (Hygiene) for the needs of Faculty of Medicine, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Department of "Neurology, Psychiatry, Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation, Preventive Medicine and Public Health".

### **I. GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE PROCEDURE**

Pursuant to Order of the Rector No. RD-38-579/06.10.2022 of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and Decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine (Protocol No. 109/04.10.22) I have been elected as an external member of the Scientific Jury under the procedure for occupying the academic position "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR", higher education field 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1. Medicine (Hygiene) at the Department of "Neurology, Psychiatry, Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation, Preventive Medicine and Public Health", Medical Faculty of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

In the competition promulgated in SG, issue 61 from 02.08.2022 for associate professor in "Hygiene" the sole candidate is Dr. Rositsa Bozhidarova Popova, MD, PhD. assistant professor in the same department.

Dr. Rositsa Bozhidarova Popova, MD, PhD has presented all necessary documents in compliance with the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupancy of Academic Positions at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for participation in the open competition. This opinion has been drawn up on the basis of the documents submitted by the candidate.

### **II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANDIDATE**

Dr. Rositsa Bozhidarova Popova was born in the city of Burgas, where she graduated from the English High School "Geo Milev" in 1996. Dr. Popova is a graduate of the Higher Medical University - Sofia. In 2002, she obtained the educational and qualification degree "Master" with honors, in medicine. From 2003 to 2007, she worked as a general practitioner at the "Dr. Organdzhiyski" Polyclinic, Shtip, Republic of Macedonia. From February 2007 to 2010, she was a consultant for balanced and healthy nutrition for various diseases at the Diet Centers Group, Sofia. From November 2010 to 2012, she worked as a medical representative

of baby milk and food at the company “AXON Bulgaria” OOD – MILUPA. From February 2013 to present, Dr. Popova is a doctor-teacher at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski”, University Hospital - Lozenets, having successively held the academic positions of assistant (since 2013) and chief assistant since 2018. She has one recognized medical specialty - Nutrition and Dietetics (2012).

In 2014, she defended a dissertation on the topic “Malnutrition - modern diagnostic and therapeutic approaches” and obtained the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

Dr. Popova has completed a number of courses in the field of nutrition, biostatistics and information technology. The serious international specialized trainings on clinical nutrition and the problems of modern diet therapy, which contributed to her academic development and the formation of excellent pedagogical skills, are impressive. The candidate has a written and spoken knowledge of English, German and Russian.

The records of Dr Rositsa Popova indicate that candidate has met the minimal national requirements (MIN) pursuant to Art 2b, part 5 under Art. 2b, par. 5 of the ADASRB for taking up the academic position “ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR”, as it can be seen in the table below (Table 1).

Table № 1. Reference for compliance with minimum national requirements

<b>Group of indicators</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Associate Professor (number of points)</b>	<b>Points of Dr. Rositsa Popova, MD, PhD</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Indicator 1</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Indicators 3 or 4</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>G</b>	<b>Group of indicators from 5 to 9</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>302.5</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>Group of indicators from 10 to 12</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>Group of indicators from 13 to the end</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>90</b>

### III. SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY

The general scientific output of Dr. Rositsa Popova, MD, PhD includes 79 scientific works, of which 1 dissertation, 1 monograph (habilitation thesis), 38 full-text publications, contributions to 3 textbooks of hygiene and 1 practical guide, 42 contributions to national and international congresses, 40 citations in Bulgarian and foreign sources.

For the purposes of the competition, Dr. Popova has presented 5 publications that have been referenced and indexed in world-renowned scientific information databases, including Scopus and Web of Science, 9 articles in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals and in edited collections, 1 dissertation work, 1 author's abstract, 1 monograph (habilitation thesis). Dr.

Popova is the 1st author of 57.1% of the total number of actual publications, of 14.3% - 2nd author and 28.6% - 3rd and next author.

The monograph presented on the topic: "Malnutrition and depression in eating disorders". 2022. ISBN – 978-954-075429-1, the candidate examines eating disorders and related malnutrition and depressive states. The main emphasis of the habilitation thesis is malnutrition, one of the serious complications of these disorders, and based on a modern systematic analysis of the scientific literature and her own research and clinical experience, criteria for diagnosis and complex therapeutic approaches for treatment are presented. The monograph also discusses the relationship between depression and malnutrition in eating disorders. The presented tests for early detection of behavioral disorders in eating are an advantage of the habilitation thesis.

The total number of citations with which Dr. Popova participates in this competition is 15, of which 1 citation is in a referred and indexed journal in world-famous databases with scientific information (Scopus and Web of Science), 8 in a monograph and collective volumes and 6 in non-referred journals.

The author records of Dr Popova shows that the scientific output is focused on seven main strands: chronic malnutrition, dietary regimes and prevention of chronic non communicable diseases, lipid status in malnourished patients, some aspects of protective and preventive nutrition, diet therapy, eating disorders, and stress factors in students. A large part of Dr. Popova's scientific contributions are innovative with a scientific-applied and methodical nature. The main contributions of the candidate are related to supplementing the possibilities of diagnosis and treatment in patients with chronic malnutrition by introducing new methods for assessing the nutritional status, the creation of specific regimens for diet therapy applicable in modern clinical practice in patients with chronic malnutrition, the development of dietary guidelines with a preventive purpose intended for risk groups.

For the current competition, Dr. Popova has enclosed a list of participations in prestigious forums in Bulgaria and abroad with a total number of 40 scientific communications, in 78.9% of which the candidate is the first author. Out of these 5 comprise published abstracts in international journals referenced and indexed in global databases with a total IF - 8.57, Hirsch-index – 1.

Dr. Popova has participated in 1 scholarly-research project - the "NutritionDay" project, DVR-Nr. 0688967, funded by the European Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ESPN) and Medical University – Vienna, 2016-2017.

Dr. Popova is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Union, and is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Bulgarian Society of Nutrition and Dietetics, and of the Board of

Directors of the Federation of European Nutrition Society (FENS).

#### **IV. EDUCATIONAL AND TEACHING ACTIVITY**

Pursuant to the report, presented by Dr. Popova, the candidate has a total of 15 years and 3 months of work experience, of which 9 years and 6 months of teaching activity. The teaching experience of Dr. Popova comprises seminars, practical exercises, colloquiums and semester exams in the mandatory discipline „Hygiene and Ecology“ for students and trainee doctors from the specialty „Medicine“ (Bulgarian and English language training), and also lectures and practical exercises in "Hygiene and Ecology" for the students of the "Nursing" specialty.

The total teaching workload of Dr. Rositsa Popova in the past 4 years is as follows:

- Completed teaching hours for the finalized 4 academic years (2017/2018, 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022) - a total of 4253.6 hours, of which general classroom employment - 3451.5 hours.

All of the above, gives me a serious reason to accept that Dr. Popova is a fully established lecturer in the specialty “Hygiene“ with outstanding professional experience and high general-medical, specialized and linguistic qualification.

#### **V. CONSULTANCY AND SCHOLARLY APPLIED ACTIVITY**

Dr. Popova popularizes the results of her scientific studies in popular articles in periodicals related to healthy eating. She is an author of a manual on healthy eating for cardiovascular diseases.

Dr. Popova provides consultative and methodical assistance at various levels in the field of public health, mainly through participation in national campaigns and training in educational programs regarding a healthy lifestyle, promotion of healthy eating in different age groups, nutrition in anorexia, in patients with multiple sclerosis, etc. As a specialist in nutrition and dietetics, Dr. Popova consults children's kitchens with preparing food for infants and children over 1-year-old, as well as with kitchens preparing food according to individual menus.


#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the materials presented for the competition I can say that Assist. Prof. Dr. Rositsa Popova, MD, PhD possesses the relevant scholarly achievements, teaching experience and professional competence, which correspond to the requirements for taking up the academic position “ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR”, according to ADASRB the Regulations on the Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupancy of Academic Positions at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Therefore, I give my positive assessment with conviction and propose to the members of the Scientific Jury to award the acaderrilc title “ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR” to Dr. Rositsa

Bozhidarova Popova, MD, PhD in the specialty "Hygiene" for the needs of Faculty of Medicine, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Department of "Neurology, Psychiatry, Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation, Preventive Medicine and Public Health".

17.11.2022

Yours sincerely:   
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