

(English translation)

## **REVIEW**

on Competition procedure for the position of

### **Professor**

in the field 3.2 Psychology (General and Developmental Psychology)

Announced by Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Faculty of Education and Art Sciences in the State Gazette, issue 22/16.03.2021 and on the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski web page

**By Prof. Irina Zinovieva, Dr.Sc.**

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, professional field 3.2 Psychology in her capacity of Scientific Jury Member following

Order# RD 38-236 / 17.05.2021 of the Rector of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

The **only candidate** in this competition procedure for Professor is **Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva, Ph.D., currently Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education and Art Sciences, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.**

The candidate was admitted to the competition by a commission appointed by Order of the Rector № RD 38-236 / 17.05.2021.

## **Presentation of the candidate**

Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva graduated in special pedagogy at the Faculty of Pedagogy at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and received a master's degree in 1999. In the period 2000 - 2003 she was a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology at the Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In 2004 she defended her doctorate in psychology on "Psychosocial identity and subjective mental well-being in adolescence". In the same year she was elected an assistant professor, and later a chief assistant professor in the Section Psychology of Personality and Methodology of Psychological Measurement of the same institution. Again, in 2011 she won a competition and became an Associate Professor, continuing to work in this section until 2017. There she supervised 3 dissertations for the degree of "Doctor of Psychology", defended by Zornitsa Totkova (2014), Krassimira Mineva (2015) and Boyan Vassilev (2020).

In 2018, after winning a competition, Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva took the position of full-time Associate Professor in the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Affairs at the Faculty of Education and Art Sciences of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski ", where she still works today. In 2019 she was elected Deputy Dean of the same faculty, in charge with research, international affairs and public relations.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva is a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, the Society of Psychologists in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Association for Training and Development. She is also a member of the editorial boards of the journals "Bulgarian Journal of Psychology", "Rhetoric and Communications" and two online publications. Another aspect of her diverse activities is her participation as a projects evaluator in national competitions under the Erasmus+ and ERA NET + programs, for which she prepares expert opinions and reports. She also takes an active part in the organization of scientific forums at national and international level.

Along with that, she is also a practicing psychologist, giving trainings in companies and non-governmental organizations, providing consulting services, focus groups facilitation, education courses. Often a sought-after psychologist in the media, she gives interviews on various topics of everyday life, prepares analyzes and comments for electronic media.

She is fluent in written and spoken English, and to some extent has knowledge of Russian and French.

## **Academic Teaching**

As a full-time Associate professor at Faculty of Education and Art Sciences, Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva teaches courses in General Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Educational Psychology and Psychological Crisis Intervention. The curricular and extracurricular workload of the candidate satisfies and exceeds the normative requirements of Sofia University.

In addition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva is a part-time lecturer in a number of other Bulgarian academic institutions. Since 2014 he has been teaching at the Military Academy "G. S. Rakovski" Socio-psychological training, Personality Psychology, Social Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Mass Behavior and Crisis Communication. At the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" she teaches courses on Introduction to Psychology and Assessment and Development of Prosocial Behavior (since 2017), with a series of master's theses defended under her supervision. Relatively recently - since 2019 - she is a part-time lecturer at the National Academy of Arts with courses in Art therapy and Experimental methods in psychology based on art.

## **Assessment of the candidate according to the minimum national requirements and the obligatory criteria of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva submitted a diploma for PhD degree and a scientifically reviewed monograph - the main habilitation work - titled "Identity and coping with stress", by which she meets the minimum national requirements in groups A and B. Both texts are in the field of the competition, with which the candidate fulfills the basic requirements of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

For indicators in group D, the candidate has presented two other monographs, one co-authored. There are also 4 articles referenced in the Web of Science, in two of which the candidate is a single authr, the others are in co-authorship. They were published in the journal Philosophy (1) and Pedagogy (2), as well as in the International Conference on Automation and Informatics in Varna (2020), which testifies to the candidate's skills to participate in interdisciplinary activities and to integrate in academic communities outside of psychology.

The scientific productivity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva is clearly evident from the other papers presented in the competition - 43 articles and texts published in journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, 2 extended studies published in journals with scientific reviewing or in edited collective volumes and 3 chapters from a collective monograph. The total number of points in group of indicators D is 601 and, again, significantly exceeds both the minimum national requirements and those of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

The citations of the works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva, which the author presented for participation in the competition, are a total of 52, of which 4 in editions, referenced and indexed in SCOPUS (of which 1 by foreign authors, the rest by authors from Bulgaria) and 47 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review. These numbers do not include self-citations. The citation in Manolov, M., Stoyanov, I. and Georgieva, Z. (2019) The Role of Bulgarian Proverbs in the Modern Family. Open Journal of Social Sciences, 7, 300-317, which the candidate refers to as a citation in SCOPUS, cannot be found in this database and should be calculated as giving 5 points. The total number of points from the citations is 535 (group of indicators E), and not as the candidate calculates - 525. This significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements and convincingly demonstrates the high response that the works of Assoc. Prof. Stefanova-Bakracheva have in the national psychological literature. The documentation of the competition includes a number of other citations, but they are explicitly stated as non-participating in the competition and will not be commented, but they confirm the conclusion that the work of Assoc. Prof. Stefanova-Bakracheva is highly evaluated by psychologists in Bulgaria.

Indicators group E: Three doctoral dissertations have been defended under her scientific supervision. She has participated in four national projects and three international ones, in all of which she was a member of the team or an external expert. The total number of points on this group of indicators is 240, which also exceeds the minimum national requirements.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva *fully meets* the requirements of the minimum national requirements and the requirements of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

In terms of content, the scientific production of the candidate is in full compliance with the topic of the announced competition for holding the academic position "Professor" in General and Developmental Psychology. The candidate's works fall in

the field of General and Developmental Psychology, partially covering the border areas of psychotherapy and health psychology.

The scientific work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva is characterized by complexity and originality. All areas of her scientific and pedagogical interests are characterized by novelty and scientific and applied significance.

### **Scientific contributions of the candidate**

After careful study of the submitted documentation on the current procedure for holding the academic position of "Professor", I am convinced of the adequacy of scientific contributions presented in the self-assessment of the candidate. In this review I will indicate only some of the contributions to illustrate the adequacy of the application in this competition for academic position of "Professor".

Elements of scientific contribution can be found in the scientific works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva in a number of fields.

*The first group concerns the relationships between self-identity and coping with stress.* Some interesting points in the relevant studies are the following:

- Building, enhancing and improving adaptive capacity to deal with the requirements of the context is a personal resource. This is an expression of stabilization of identity and a prerequisite for higher level of experienced psychological well-being.
- One of the results states that active coping strategies stimulate identity building, while emotional focus and avoidance support postponement of choices and of self-determination. In practice, understanding of these processes can contribute to improving self-reflection skills. Thus, on the one hand, the accumulation of resources can be achieved, ensuring adaptability to the requirements of the environment and, on the other hand, more effective ways of dealing with stress can be acquired. These are internal changes that can last throughout the life cycle and, according to the author, allow for "anticipatory self-preservation."
- An interesting point in the concept of the relationship between identity and coping with stress is the thesis that uncertainty causes a higher degree of "non-self-determination" in the author's terms, but at the same time provokes an orientation towards active daily strategies for dealing with stress.

### *Second group: relationships of reflexivity, meaning in life and well-being*

Three studies are presented that trace the links between the attitude of proactive reflexivity ("proactive mindfulness") and the meaning of life with different types of coping strategies (mostly proactive and reactive) and mental well-being and "flourishing" (a term from positive psychology). Three results seem most interesting:

- In the studied sample, the search for meaning is more pronounced than the meaning that is already found or the one, which is sustained.
- Maintaining static choices blocks personal development and does not stimulate experience of high levels of psychological well-being.
- In the studied sample, positive emotions and optimism are experienced more often than negative emotions and pessimism. This is a result that contradicts the common belief that in Bulgaria pessimism is more common than optimism.

*A third group of contributions is related to the research on the ego of young people in Bulgaria.* I find two innovative lines of analysis:

- Research on the Virtual Self, ways of building and maintaining it, as well as the relations to the meaning of life.
- Derealization as a purposeful choice of escape from reality, which empirical research reveals as a popular modern strategy for coping

These are just some of the scientific contributions in the works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Stefanova-Bakracheva. The review does not intend to list all, but to illustrate the depth of the approach of the participant in the competition and to show the degree of convergence between the requirements of the position for which she is applying and the qualities of the candidate.

## **CONCLUSION**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva is a person with remarkable efficiency, purposefulness and perseverance. With her scientific works she makes contributions in the field of psychological theory and practice. Her works are original and intriguing. They are widely cited in the Bulgarian psychological literature.

She has extensive pedagogical and scientific experience.

The topics of her publications are in full accordance with the topic of the announced competition. The scientific and pedagogical activity of the candidate fully satisfies the requirements of the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its application, as well as the respective Regulations of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

All this gives me reason with conviction in the scientific and pedagogical merits of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva to support her candidacy in the current competition for the academic position "Professor" in General and Developmental Psychology in the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Affairs of the Faculty of Education and Art Sciences, at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Sofia,

July 11, 2021

Scientific Jury Member:

Prof. Irina Zinovieva, Dr.Sc.