

OPINION

by Prof. Virginia Ivanova Zhelyazkova, DSc from
VUZF University - Sofia

of the materials submitted in relation to the competition
for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor"
at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
in field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences
professional field 3.8 Economics (Corporate sustainability and
responsibility - in Bulgarian and English languages)

In the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor",
announced in the State Gazette, no. 30 of 15.04.2022 and on the website of the Sofia
University "St. Kliment Ohridski", as the only candidate participated Chief Assistant
Professor Marina Stefanova, Ph.D., from the same university.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

By Order RD-38-273/06.06.2022 of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"
I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury under the present procedure.
With the decision of the scientific jury, reflected in Protocol No. 1/28.06.2022, I am
tasked with preparing an opinion on the candidature in the present procedure.

The current competition is announced in the State Gazette, no. 30 of
15.04.2022 in field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences,
professional direction 3.8 Economics (Corporate sustainability and responsibility -
in Bulgarian and in English languages).

As the only candidate in the competition has appeared Chief Assistant Marina Stefanova, Ph.D. from SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

For the purposes of carrying out the procedure, the candidate has submitted a number of documents and materials certifying the results of her scientific, creative and educational activities, as follows:

- Autobiography;
- Diplomas for higher education and for the acquired Ph.D.;
- List of scientific publications;
- Summaries of scientific publications in Bulgarian and English;
- Reference on the implementation of the national minimum requirements under the provisions of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation;
- Reference on the fulfillment of the additional requirements of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for occupying the academic position of "associate professor", laid down in the relevant regulations of this university;
- Reference to the original scientific contributions in her works;
- Reference for the citation of her works;
- Reference for the educational activity she has performed;
- Documents certifying her work experience to date.

The documents correctly provide complete and detailed information about the applicant's work.

2. General characteristics of the applicant's activity

Chief Assistant Professor Marina Stefanova, Ph.D., has enviable experience in the field of teaching and conducting scientific research in the new and very promising for science and practice field of the current competition - corporate sustainability and responsibility. In the last ten years, the problems related to the implementation of responsible management have taken a leading place both for the regulators and for the managers of the individual organizations. At the same time, despite the great interest in the topic and the rapidly emerging good practices, there is a great lack of information and guidance on how to achieve corporate sustainability in a responsible way.

Therefore, the works and educational activities of Dr. Stefanova are particularly valuable - they give specific answers to a number of not only theoretical, but also practical questions and prepare readers and students for the new reality of corporate management - a reality in which environmental, social and management issues become an integral part of corporate strategy and vision.

Dr. Stefanova is the author of two independent monographic works, one textbook, one collection of educational materials and a number of other scientific publications on the subject of the competition - book chapters, articles and reports at scientific conferences. She is very active not only in the university and in the scientific circles, but also in the public space, being the author of numerous materials of a scientific-popular nature that illuminate various aspects of the topic of sustainable and responsible corporate management.

One of the two independent monographs: "Reporting the Sustainability of Enterprises. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Aspects of Their Business" is a volume of 216 pages and is dedicated to the specifics of ESG accountability of enterprises. In the other - "Corporate Social Responsibility in Bulgarian Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises" in a volume of 230 pages, the candidate examines the very important and related to a number of specific and complex problems of applying the principles of corporate social responsibility in small companies in our country. I consider these two pieces of research as interrelated, as they analyze the problem of applying the principles of corporate social responsibility in two different but key aspects and contribute to the formation of the candidate's profile as a subject specialist.

The first work is well structured in an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. In it, Dr. Stefanova consistently examines a number of theoretical issues of the ESG aspects of the activities of enterprises and the problems related to the accountability of this activity. The consideration of the formation of non-financial reporting in historical terms and the detailed analysis of the leading sustainability indicators that find a place in the process of management and then disclosure of the companies' activities are valuable. An important contribution of this work is the analysis of non-financial declarations and other corporate publicly disclosed documents certifying the companies' attitude towards ESG topics. Based on this analysis, the author has drawn significant conclusions about the good practices in this direction and offers a way to rate their achievements.

The second monograph - "Corporate Social Responsibility in Bulgarian Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises" is distinguished by the fact that it clearly and comprehensibly offers the author's position, based on a detailed review of the scientific literature on the issue, on what are the main factors for implementing corporate social responsibility in small and medium enterprises in our country. This type of enterprises are of particular interest, as they are the basis of the Bulgarian economy with a significant contribution to the formation of the gross domestic product. There is hardly a company today that denies the need to apply the principles of corporate social responsibility. However, the big question is - how exactly to do this, taking into account the specifics of the company's activity and the peculiarities of the dynamics of the economic sector within which it functions. In her work Dr. Stefanova provides specific answers to this question, as well as a number of valuable guidelines.

In the chapters of books in which Dr. Stefanova is an author, as well as in the articles and reports she presents at scientific conferences, she develops various aspects of the field of the competition, which complement the analyzes developed in her monographs, and which shed light on various important issues of the practical application of corporate social responsibility. It is particularly interesting and valuable that in some of her scientific publications Dr. Stefanova critically examines and analyzes the importance of preparing human capital for the application of the principles of sustainable and responsible management. The role of the specialist in these matters as an agent of change is the subject of a separate study, which in itself is a contribution to practice, since without the presence of prepared employees it is impossible to implement any corporate policy.

Dr. Stefanova applies in the educational process the conclusions she reaches within the framework of her scientific works. This is evident from the textbook and the study guide dedicated to the problems of corporate sustainability and responsibility. The textbook has been developed independently by the candidate, and the study guide is the work of a collective of authors. These two works are very useful not only for students who study various disciplines in the field of corporate social responsibility, but also for practitioners who have to work in this field. I consider the development of the textbook by Dr. Stefanova and the study guide as an important contribution to the provision of up-to-date educational content in the field of higher education in Bulgaria. Thanks to these works, hundreds of students form their basic knowledge of corporate sustainability and responsibility - a topic with a huge perspective in view of the policy of the European Union for the realization of a green

economy, as well as with the trends in the world plan to establish a low carbon economy.

I accept Dr. Stefanova's scientific contributions as she has formulated them in her self-assessment. I believe that her works have possess both theoretical and practical contributions, which is not a very common phenomenon for a scientific production, and which should be emphasized as an important merit of her work. The candidate on the one hand in introduces new concepts into the scientific literature in Bulgarian, presents an analysis of existing definitions and, on the basis of this, proposes her own such, and analyzes the theory in the field of corporate social responsibility in general terms, on the other hand - gives specific answers to a number of important for practices.

3. Critical remarks, questions and recommendations

I have the following question for the candidate:

The European Commission relies on the active role of the banks for the implementation of the Green Deal by setting various conditions for clients, so that they implement and apply principles of responsible and sustainable management. This approach has recently been subject to wide debate both in the academic community and in the public space. Part of the public is of the opinion that banks should not be used as the main instrument for pushing this change, but it should come from the state. Another part believes that without the active participation of the banks in the process, the change will happen too slowly, the involvement of the banks is natural, given that the main part of the attracted resource for the economies comes from them. What is your opinion on the subject?

I would recommend the candidate to expand her research activity in international publications. This will contribute to the dissemination of the results of her work and will give her the opportunity to receive a wider feedback of her ideas and the conclusions she reaches.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the above, I conclude that Chief Assistant Professor Marina Stefanova, Ph.D., is an established scientist and recognized in the public sphere specialist in the innovative and promising field of the announced competition. The candidate meets all the requirements of the LDASRB and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the requirements of the relevant regulations of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

This gives me the reason to vote with conviction "FOR" the occupation of the academic position "associate professor" by Dr. Marina Stefanova, in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8 Economics (Corporate sustainability and responsibility - in Bulgarian and in English) at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

15.08.2022

Sofia city

Prepared the opinion:

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Prof. Virginia Zhelyazkova, DSc)