

# Opinion Statement

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**Subject:** competition for **associate professor** in **Professional field 3.7. Administration and Management (Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness, Business Development, Artificial Intelligence)**, announced in **State Gazette No. 44/19.05.2023**, with candidate **Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva**

**Reason** for submitting the opinion: participation in the Scientific Jury of the competition in accordance with the Order № Z-RK-285/13.07.2023 of the Rector of NBU and the decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury from 25.07.2023.

The opinion is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (LASDRB), the Regulations for its Implementation (RILASDRB) and the Regulation for Academic Staff Development at the NBU. Structurally, the opinion consists of VI parts and a conclusion in accordance with the template for the preparation of an opinion for holding an academic position of “Associate Professor” at the NBU.

## **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University**

In the announced competition participates one candidate – Senior Assistant Professor Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva. The documentation submitted for the competition meets the requirements of the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (Article 2b) and the Regulations on its implementation (Article 1a, paragraph 1), as well as the Regulation on Academic Staff Development at the NBU (Annex 2, Edition 21/29.11.2021, effective since 23.12.2021).

According to the submitted by the candidate Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva’s self-assessment report it is obvious that she meets the necessary minimum requirements for the scientific, teaching and research activities for the academic position of “Associate Professor”, in accordance with the RILASDRB, as follows:

Part I: Minimum requirements to the scientific, teaching and/or artistic-creative activity of the candidates for the academic positions in the professional fields, in accordance with the RILASDRB (**groups of indicators A-E**) and the corresponding number of points above the required minimum: **A 50 out of 50 points, B 100 out of 100 points, D 258.4 out of 200 points, E 80 out of 50 points and E 0 out of 0 points – not required for Associate Professor.**

Part II: Fulfilment of criteria and indicators in the long-term evaluation for the announcement of a competition for a higher academic position, according to the current NBU regulation – academic work, organizational and public work (**groups of indicators G-I**): **G 125 out of 50 points, Z 90 out of 70 points and I 90 out of 50 points.**

The candidate’s total score (**793.4 pts**) on the assessment indicators is significantly higher than the required minimum (570 pts).

## **II. Research (creative) activity and results**

Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva participates in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the Professional field 3.7. Administration and

Management (**Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness, Business Development, Artificial Intelligence**) at NBU with:

- one monograph (habilitation thesis);
- 4 published chapters of collective monographs;
- 1 study published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-known databases of scientific information - WoS;
- 3 articles and reports published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-known databases of scientific information - 2 in Scopus and 1 in WoS ;
- 6 studies published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes, of which 4 solo and 2 co-authored;
- 10 articles and papers, of which 1 is self-published in peer-reviewed journals.

1. Evaluation of the monographic work, creative performances or other publications corresponding in volume and completeness to a monographic work, including an assessment of the scientific and applied contributions of the author.

In the presented monographic work on “Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Artificial Intelligence in Bulgaria: Dynamics and Management” Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva explores **three** interrelated processes important from a **managerial** point of view - (1) **the evolution of economic thought** and action – as a response to contemporary socio-economic challenges, but also as a way of shaping the economic environment in which entrepreneurship and innovation develop; (2) **the trends in the development of the entrepreneurial** and innovation ecosystems as overall mechanisms for interaction, support, development and sustainability; and (3) **the dynamics of entrepreneurial and innovative opportunities** and management choices (decisions) as an opportunity for value creation and accumulation and a prerequisite for subsequent performance improvement.

The monograph traces precisely these changes in the development of the entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems in light of the interrelationships between economic and managerial concepts and business practice in Bulgaria. The result of the interaction is explored in the form of competitive strategies through which value is created.

The theoretical part of the study focuses on the most fundamental concepts and theories of economic thought, related to the approaches for the system analysis of entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems, the concept of the development of artificial intelligence, the ways of entrepreneurial and business modelling and structuring decision-making processes in business, the tools for assessing the impact of technological innovations and the effectiveness of innovative strategies.

The empirical part of the monograph includes numerous studies of the Bulgarian entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems, of current business cases in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation in Bulgaria, focusing on a range of applications of emerging technologies in the economic sectors studied. Emphasis is placed on innovations facilitating increased efficiency of business processes and the replacement of decision-making, characteristic of human intelligence, with machine efficiency based on algorithms developed to process large amounts of data and self-improving through machine and deep learning developments.

Methodologically, the author uses different qualitative and quantitative research methods. The theoretical and methodological analysis of the issues is based on the content analysis, methods of synthesis, induction and deduction, systematization, interpretation, historical analysis, analysis of indices for the assessment of entrepreneurship and innovation, qualitative and quantitative analyses of empirical research, etc.

The achieved results of the author's research can be evaluated as contributions of theoretical and practical nature. The **major scientific and applied contributions** in the monographic work can be systematized as follows:

- The main economic concepts and theories that form the framework of contemporary economic and managerial views and condition the emergence of new entrepreneurial opportunities, threats, and risks, and therefore determine the potential and constraints in managerial decision-making for entrepreneurship, innovation, and business, including and especially in times of crisis and specifically in the pandemic of the Covid-19, are synthesized. On this basis, the impacts of the crisis are analysed and some general perspectives on the dynamics and management of entrepreneurship and innovation are systematised;
- An interdisciplinary approach is applied, summarizing the applications of ecosystem approaches to the study and assessment of entrepreneurship and innovation and proposing an analytical overview of the Bulgarian entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems based on an author's model for the analysis of both ecosystems;
- A wide range of research is systematized to highlight trends and dynamics for the management of the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems, including the presentation of own empirical studies, global synthetic indices, macro growth parameters, business statistics, aggregated data on innovative Bulgarian enterprises and the application of artificial intelligence;
- Current approaches to building and implementing business and competitive strategies through the development and implementation of innovative cognitive technologies are analysed and summarized;
- The general and specific effects of the introduction and use of artificial intelligence innovations for forecasting and decision-making as a recommendation for economic and business policy are systematized;
- Models are proposed to assist the management of the modern firm in assessing the business value created by the application of innovative solutions and artificial intelligence, including the implementation of innovative solutions in the fintech, retail and e-commerce sectors.

**Conclusion:** *The monographic work, presented by Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva has the character of an independent and exhaustive **actual scientific research** in a relatively new problematic area with a definite theoretical and practical orientation.*

2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other attached publications (creative performances) made after the appointment to the academic position of "Senior Assistant Professor" or the academic position of "Associate Professor" (for candidates for Professor). It shall also include an assessment of the peer-review requirement for publications.

In the presented publications outside the habilitation thesis is established in a categorical way consistency **in the scientific interests and research of the candidate Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva** within the chosen field. All publications are relevant to the context of the announced competition – 3.7. Administration and Management (**Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness, Business Development, Artificial Intelligence**). They are mainly focused in the following areas: (1) entrepreneurial dynamics and entrepreneurial ecosystem development; (2) competitiveness management at national, regional and firm level; (3) management and business development to expand business operations, increase market presence and enhance overall profitability of companies; (4) innovation and management of innovation processes, and application of cognitive artificial intelligence technologies to improve productivity and overall business performance and business policies.

The publications are of theoretical, theoretical-practical, and applied nature and **four** of them are published in international databases indexed by Scopus or Web of Science (WoS) (two in Scopus and two in WoS).

The presented scientific production has its own scientific and applied contributions and **does not repeat that for the award of the PhD and the academic position of “Senior Assistant Professor”**.

### *3. Citation from other authors.*

The publications submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position “Associate Professor” of the Senior Assist. Prof. Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva** have been cited in scientific publications, refereed, and indexed in world-known databases with scientific information (3 citations have been found – **group D, indicator 11**), as well as in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer review and in journals with scientific peer review (5 citations have been found – **group D, indicator 12**). According to the reference from the NBU Library submitted for the competition, 65 citations to publications by Dr Hadjitchoneva were identified, including 21 citations by other authors and at least 4 citations in publications indexed by Scopus or WoS. On the other hand, the analysis of citations through *Google Scholar* identified in a definitive way 44 citations by other authors of the scientific production of the candidate in this contest for the period 2018-2023.

I consider that the scientific output is of high scientific quality, presented in reputable journals and accessible to a wide audience. The topics of the scientific production are focused on specific issues of science and practice and have contemporary scientific and applied relevance. The applicant fulfils the requirements.

**My overall assessment of the research activity of Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva is positive.**

### **III. Teaching and Learning Activities**

The candidate is a full-time lecturer at NBU. On the basis of the long-term evaluation report, it is obvious that Senior Assist. Prof. Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva** fulfils the norm for curricular and extracurricular activity. As a Senior Assistant Professor in the Department of Administration and Management, Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva** participates in the improvement of the Bachelor Programme “Business Management and Entrepreneurship” – full-time and distance learning, and the Master Programme “Business Administration” – full-time and distance learning. She actively participates in the development of *new and adaptation of the content to the requirements of business in the courses she leads* in these programmes (Indicator 31 of the Self-evaluation).

In the Moodle platform of the NBU, Senior Assist. Prof. Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva** has published author’s teaching materials (e-textbook, presentations, and simulations) in the main courses – “Competitiveness and Business Development” and “Competitiveness and Innovation” (**Indicator 36**). She teaches in foreign language courses (**4 courses developed in English** – MHRE314 Project Management, MHRE117 Business context and HRM, MHRE111 Strategies and policies for HR planning and management, MHRE413 Innovation and creativity in organization, as well as 1 course **in French** - POLF411 Finances publiques et politique budgétaire – reference to the e-Catalogue of NBU Curricula and **Indicator 41**).

For the analysed period, Senior Assist. Prof. Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva** has been a scientific supervisor of 13 graduates, has prepared over 40 reviews and has participated in 12 examination committees (**Group Z, indicator 38**).

Her teaching is very well appreciated by the students. For the last 5 years, the average student satisfaction rating for the courses of Senior Assist. Prof. Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva**’s

satisfaction rate is **4.14** out of a **maximum of 5** (according to the Quality and Assessment Centre and the e-Teaching Report: Monitoring - Students Survey).

In her academic activity, Senior Assist. Prof. Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva** actively participates in joint research projects with students from the Business Management and Entrepreneurship Bachelor Programmes and Master of Business Administration (MBA) Programme. The immediate result is the joint collective monograph “Sustainable Urban Development – Lessons for Sofia”, as well as in the practical training of students through field research on the Educational project “Urban policies, business environment and local democracy: a study of a medium-sized Bulgarian city (Lom)” (**Group Z, Indicator 37**). Together with the students, she conducts a number of studies, the results of which she presents at national and international conferences.

Senior Assist. Prof. Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva** has delivered public lectures invited by EUDigit – European Digital Citizens Project – Digitalisation and Public Administration, (17.12.2021), on the topic “The Bulgarian Experience: Insights from Lessons Learned?”, as well as invited by University Savoie Mont Blanc of Chambéry, France, in the International Summer School organized by the European University Cooperation Project UNITA – Staff Week International Cooperation and Projects (12-13.07.2021), on the topic “Decision making and artificial intelligence in multicultural contexts” (**Group G, Indicator 29**).

To improve and expand her teaching skills and knowledge, Senior Assist. Prof. Dr **Juliana Hadjitchoneva** actively participates in training programs for the teaching and administrative staff of the NBU (Group I, Indicator 42; References from the Centre for Career Development and Learning Resources).

**All this gives me the reason to evaluate Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva as a well-established lecturer, responsible and loyal teacher. Her teaching activity is definitely related to the subject of the competition, and the accumulated teaching experience fully meets the requirements for the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the Professional field 3.7. Administration and Management.**

#### **IV. Administrative and public activities**

Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva participates in the Programme Council of the Department of Administration and Management of the NBU as a programme consultant of the Master’s Programme “Business Administration” and Bachelor’s Programme “Business Management and Entrepreneurship” in the period 2015-2019, as well as in the Programme Council of the Department of Political Science of the NBU in the period after 2020. She contributes to the improvement of the Bachelor’s Programme “Business Management and Entrepreneurship” and the Master’s Programme “Business Administration”. She created and maintains since 2016 the Facebook site/group “MBA – New Bulgarian University” with up-to-date information in the field of management, economics and on significant events of the academic community in these areas. She participates regularly in departmental council meetings, keeps her office hours as a lecturer and regularly conducts classes.

Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Hadjitchoneva contributes to the accreditation of the Bachelors’ and Masters’ Programmes of the Department of Administration and Management. She has made a distinct contribution to the international recognition of New Bulgarian University. She actively works with research teams in a number of countries and continents, including France, Chile, Algeria, Morocco, Cameroon, etc. She is a member of international and European research networks, e.g., the International Association of French-speaking Economists (AIELF), the European Research Network ERECO-PGV (#European #Research #Community), of which she is a board member. She is an Associate Researcher at the Centre for Institutional Research of the Bernardo O’Higgins University in Santiago de Chile, Chile. She is a member of the

Editorial Board of RIELF, the international journal of French-speaking economists, and a reviewer for the Journal of Economic Thought of the Bulgarian Academy of Science.

She actively participates in organizing and conducting scientific conferences, congresses, workshops, scientific seminars, training seminars, practical-applied seminars, student discussion forums, public lectures at the NBU.

**With the administrative and public activities, Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva contributes to the development and improvement of the educational process in various undergraduate and graduate programmes at NBU.**

#### **V. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)**

My personal impressions of Juliana Hadjitchoneva are that she is highly responsible, creative, precise, and proactive in her work. In her teaching she extensively applies interactive learning tools, and in her research – the system-integrated approach. She enjoys unquestionable authority among her colleagues and a good reputation among students, also maintains intensive contacts with business experts.

#### **VI. Opinions, recommendations and comments on the applicant's activities and achievements**

The submitted for review scientific publications of Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva are developed on a fundamental theoretical and empirical basis. The theses and practical recommendations contained in them are well argued. I have no specific critical remarks on the content of the candidate's scientific works. I believe that the candidate has undoubted potential for participation in research projects in the European research space in the fields of entrepreneurship, management and business development, innovation and artificial intelligence, competitiveness and the business environment, and international economic relations.

The following recommendations can be made for future research and teaching activities:

- to continue to combine research and teaching work with that of an expert and consultant;
- to expand the field of research in artificial intelligence and business management;
- to continue publishing textbooks on the subjects she teaches.

#### **Conclusion**

The candidate for the competition **Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva** meets the requirements for holding the academic position of “Associate Professor”, according to the Law on Academic Staff Development, the Regulations for its Implementation (RILASDRB), as well as the Regulation on Academic Staff Development at the NBU. The candidate's scientific publications under the competition contain important theoretical, methodological, and practical-applied contributions, which are the fruit of her personal scientific search and that further develop management science.

I propose to the members of the Scientific Jury the candidate for the competition **Senior Assist. Prof. Dr Juliana Hadjitchoneva to be selected for the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the Professional field 3.7 Administration and Management at NBU (Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness, Business Development, Artificial Intelligence).**

Date: 31.07.2023

Signature: .....