

STATEMENT

By Prof. Dr. Iordanka Hristova Iovkova

Professional field 3.8. Economics Scientific speciality "Economics and Management"

University of National and World Economy - Sofia

Subject: competition for the academic position of **associate professor** in professional field 3.7. Administration and Management (Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness, Business Development, Artificial Intelligence), announced by New Bulgarian University in Official Gazette 44/19.05. 2023 , with candidate **Chief Assistant Dr. Juliana Bozhidarova Hadzhichoneva**

Reason for submitting the opinion: participation in the composition of the Scientific Jury of the competition according to the Order № Z-PK-285/13.07.2023 of the Rector of NBU and the decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury from 25.07.2023.

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

Only one candidate participated in the announced competition - Chief asst. Dr. Juliana Bozhidarova Hadzhichoneva. The candidate has submitted a self-assessment report and the necessary evidence for fulfilling the requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor - both the national and the additional requirements of the NBU.

On the basis of acquaintance with the submitted materials, scientific production, research and teaching work of the Chief Assistant Dr. Hadzhichoneva is formed my assessment that the candidate fully fulfills the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the NBU for occupying the academic position of associate professor: 1. She successfully defended her dissertation in 2015. 2. She has submitted an independent monographic work published by an academic publishing house. 3. He has over 5 years of teaching experience as a principal assistant. 4. She has sufficient number of publications in the form of articles and reports in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world databases of scientific information. 5. There are also a significant number of publications (articles, reports, studies, individual chapters in collective monographs) in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals and in scientifically edited collective journals. 6. The number of citations is quite sufficient. 7. There is a clearly formulated research programme.

Dr. Juliana Hadzhichoneva is a member of the International Association of Francophone Economists and of the Board of the European Research Network; she has translated a scientific work from French into Bulgarian; she has given public lectures in foreign educational institutions; she participates in the improvement of curricula and the development of new courses of study , in the organization of a number of scientific forums and in the organization and conduct of those of a practical and educational nature; she strictly fulfils her teaching commitments; she participates actively in the academic life of Department and of the University.

The quantitative dimensions of the above-mentioned evaluations are the number of points required under the PPPASRB and the current NBU Regulation. The candidate exceeds the points required under the PPPASRB and the NBU regulation:

with 400 points required under the PPPRAUDB she has 488,4;

with 170 points required by the NBU Regulation, she has 305

with a total of 570 points required, the applicant has 793,4.

II. Research activities and results

1. Evaluation of the monographic work

The monograph of the candidate, presented as a habilitation thesis with the title "Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Artificial Intelligence in Bulgaria - Dynamics and Management" is devoted to essential and topical problems of management and economic science and business practice in their interconnectedness and synergetic interactions.

The first part of the work outlines its theoretical framework, which includes a focused literature review of the emergence, development and upgrading of the ideas and concept of entrepreneurship and innovation. It traces the evolution of economic theories and their implications for business practice. Emphasis is placed on the dynamics of changes in the business environment and business climate in the XXI century, strongly influenced by the pandemic situation in the world and specifically in Bulgaria and giving rise to radically new problems and challenges for economic and management science and practice. This explains the logic and importance of the ongoing transformation processes and the need to develop entrepreneurship and innovation in the direction of digital transformation and the use of artificial intelligence in business.

The second part with its methodological and methodical character is an undoubted achievement of the author, who on the basis of theoretical concepts and the ecosystem approach explores entrepreneurship and innovation as a whole. Through the analysis of models of processes and the relationships between them, the formulation and construction of approaches to analysis and author's models for the study of the Bulgarian entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems is achieved. The results of an empirical analysis of the Bulgarian entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems are presented by formulating and assessing specific cultural, social and material characteristics. A valuable moment is the assessment of the place of entrepreneurship and innovation in the Bulgarian economy, which was done professionally and comprehensively. Current and significant information on the macro- and micro-environment, competitiveness, technological readiness, etc. is presented. The general picture of the dynamics of entrepreneurship in Bulgaria provides valuable information and can be used as a starting point for further research.

The third part has the additional dignity of proving the viability of the ideas, concepts and models developed in the first two parts. The technological drivers of the business environment (business modeling, strategizing, technological leadership, artificial intelligence, automation of managerial decisions) are presented, which, through the approach of integrating technology and innovation, form the basis for the development of a general business value model, the practical application of which is being tested in companies in the financial, retail and e-commerce sectors. The results obtained support and prove the advantages of innovation, technology and artificial intelligence in terms of customer satisfaction and most financial and economic indicators of the companies studied.

In summary, I believe that the monograph by Dr. Hadjicheva **meets all the requirements** - it treats an extremely topical and important managerial-economic problem; the most important moments in the state and development of the object of research are identified; there is an interdisciplinary approach and analysis; it is structured properly - conceptual-theoretical, methodological and practical part, etc. The research results achieved by the author are of scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied character.

In general, I accept the **contributions** formulated by the candidate, presenting my own more summarized and synthesized formulation:

1.A theoretical framework is derived and a conceptual scheme of the relationships between entrepreneurship, innovation and artificial intelligence is developed. This has been achieved on the basis of a concise and focused review of economic thought and managerial aspects of the issues. On the adopted theoretical framework and conceptual scheme is based the study of the development of entrepreneurial and ecosystems, and of artificial intelligence, including in the context of crises (given the challenges posed by the Coved-19).

2.A logical approach of combining interdisciplinarity and ecosystemicity is used in the study, analysis and evaluation of entrepreneurship, innovation and artificial intelligence.

3.Models are proposed to study the entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems in Bulgaria The characteristics and interaction of technological drivers are summarized, based on which a general model of business value is developed and specified for the financial, retail and e-commerce sectors.

4.The proposed model of business value with the relevant specifics for the individual sectors is tested in real conditions in companies from the above sectors. The results of its application convincingly show the possibilities of the model for application in business practice and the useful effects of its use in the functioning of different types of business.

5.Through the developed business cases for companies from the mentioned sectors, the importance and possibilities of artificial intelligence in terms of automation and optimization of managerial decision-making, including in the development of business strategies and competitive strategies, are characterized and clearly outlined.

2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other attached publications made after the appointment to the academic post of Chief Assistant (assessment of the requirement for peer-reviewed publications).

The remaining scientific publications that Dr. Hadjiçoneva submitted for the competition for Associate Professor warrant the following evaluations:

a. Developed and published after the dissertation defense.

6. They show a sustained, systematic and consistently developed research interest in the problems of the chosen research area.

b. All are related to the theme of the competition, which is evident from the clearly emerging main thematic areas - development and management of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystems, competitiveness and competitive strategies; innovation and innovative approaches to enhance competitiveness; artificial intelligence in entrepreneurial activities.

r. Published in relevant scholarly journals - one study and two articles - in refereed and Web of Science-indexed journals; two articles - in Scopus-journals; six studies, including four stand-alone studies - in peer-reviewed journals.

Certain scientific and applied contributions also appear in publications outside the monographic work:

1. The approaches to entrepreneurship analysis are systematized in theoretical terms and a model of analysis is indicated as a theoretical basis for studying the main characteristics of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, for comparative analysis with other entrepreneurial ecosystems, for identifying the factors influencing the development of entrepreneurship and for formulating expected trends in this sphere.

2. The problem of business competitiveness is studied extensively in different aspects - definition of the concept of specific business structures; derivation of specific characteristics of their competitiveness; analyses in the direction of interdependencies: competitiveness - business management - competitive strategies - sustainable competitive advantages.

3. Based on general theoretical formulations, applied aspects of problems related to artificial intelligence, its place and role in the improvement of business organization and management and its internationalization, as well as the effects it generates in terms of business development and the improvement of the results of the implementation of various business operations and activities are developed.

3. Citation from other authors.

From the documentation submitted in connection with the competition it is evident that the scientific publications of the Chief Assistant Dr. Hadzhichoneva have been cited in journals that are refereed and indexed in world databases of scientific information and in peer-reviewed journals. The attached reference shows 65 references to the candidate's works. Of these, 21 are citations, of which 8 are in the above-mentioned type of journals, 3 of which are in refereed and indexed journals and 5 in peer-reviewed journals.

The above assessments, the publications in reputable scientific journals and the presence of a significant number of citations give grounds to characterize the scientific production of Dr. Hadzhichoneva as developed at a high scientific level, dedicated to topical issues, containing original and creative approaches to research, as well as ideas and proposals relevant to the development of theoretical knowledge and business practice. Through relevant publications, the results of Dr. Hadzhichoneva's research are shared and accessible to the Bulgarian and foreign academic communities and to all other interested entities - business, students, PhD students, etc.

III. Teaching and learning activities

Dr. Juliana Hadzhichoneva has teaching experience as a senior lecturer at the Department of Administration and Management of the NBU for over 5 years. During this period of time, she has performed her teaching duties strictly and responsibly and has established herself as a respected academic lecturer.

Chief Assistant Dr. Hadzhichoneva fulfills the required annual teaching load. She actively participates in activities related to the improvement of the teaching process - improvement of undergraduate programmes (for full-time and distance learning), updating of courses, develops teaching materials that are uploaded to the University's Moodle platform, teaches courses in English and French. The topics and content of her courses are related to her research work and include the results of her research. This contributes to strengthening and developing the link between university education, research and business. The evaluation of her teaching work by students is high (4.14 with a maximum of 5). These positive features of her teaching include the involvement of students in joint research projects, and public lectures given in the context of European educational projects and at the invitation of French universities. Dr. Juliana Hadzhichoneva works systematically in the direction of self-improvement and improvement of her teaching qualification by participating regularly and actively in the trainings for the NBU teaching staff, exchanging experience, ideas and information through various forms of contacts with Bulgarian and foreign colleagues.

The above characteristics are derived from the submitted documents and evidences and show the high professional level of the candidate, her activity and initiative in her academic work and present her as an established lecturer whose teaching work fully complies with the legal requirements and the NBU requirements for the academic position **of Associate Professor.**

IV. Administrative and public activities

Chief Assistant Dr. Hadzhichoneva performs her administrative duties precisely and carries out active public activities. This is evident from the presented and other supporting documents. The candidate is a member of the Programme Boards of Departments. She is responsible for the following Program Advisor to the graduate and undergraduate programs. Participates regularly and actively in the meetings of the Department of Administration and Management and of the Academic Council of the NBU, observes academic discipline. It is useful and fruitful the participation of Chief Assistant Dr. Hadzhichoneva in the development and presentation of the materials for accreditation. In addition, through her research and teaching activities, through her publications in Bulgarian and foreign scientific journals and through her membership in international research and educational organizations, forums and publications, she contributes to raising the domestic and international profile of the Department "Administration and Management" and of the NBU as a whole.

V. Personal impressions of the candidate

I have personal impressions of the Chief Assistant Dr. Hadzhichoneva. She has a keen and abiding interest in research and teaching. She puts a lot of desire, energy, creativity, knowledge, skills, innovative research and educational approaches into their implementation. She has a drive for self-improvement, maintains high scientific awareness and up-to-date research activities and teaching courses. He enjoys authority among his colleagues, students and representatives of business practice.

VI. Opinions, recommendations and comments on the candidate's activities and achievements

My opinion on the research, teaching and administrative and social activities of the Chief Assistant Dr. Hadzhichoneva is **completely positive**.

I have no significant critical remarks on the presented scientific works. Based on the assessment expressed so far and on my opinion that the candidate possesses the ability to work in relatively new interdisciplinary areas, I have the recommendation to continue her research in the broad research field she has chosen, in particular research on the challenges related to the need for changes in the organization and management of entrepreneurial structures and on the regulation of intra- and inter-firm relationships in the context of the increasing use of artificial intelligence. I also believe that it would be good to publish textbooks and teaching aids in paper form as well as electronically.

Conclusion

Chief Assistant Dr. Juliana Hadzhichoneva participated in the competition for the academic position of **Associate Professor** with a significant number of scientific publications developed at a very good scientific level. She has rich and valuable scientific and teaching experience. Her research is distinguished by its topicality, analytical approach and consistency. Her scientific production contains scientific and applied contributions. The candidate fully meets the requirements for the academic position of **Associate Professor** under the Law on the Development of Academic Staff and on the Ordinance of the NBU.

This gives me grounds for a **positive assessment** of the applicant's academic activity and for a proposal to the members of the Scientific Competition Jury to vote the candidate **Chief Assistant Dr. Juliana Hadzhichoneva to be admitted for election by the Academic Council of the NBU for the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 3.7 Administration and Management at the NBU (Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness, Business Development, Artificial Intelligence)**.

Date: 19.08.2023

Signature

