

ТРАКИЙСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ	
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PEER REVIEW

By: Prof. Albena Vutsova, PhD, "St. Kliment Ohridski" Sofia University.

Regarding: The research papers of Assoc. Prof. Darina Georgieva Zaimova, PhD, submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "professor" in the Economics and Management (Economics and Business Entrepreneurship) area of higher education, 3, Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, for the needs of the Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship Department, published in SG No. 52/16.06.2023

Reason for the peer-review: Order RD3133/19.09.2023 of the Rector of Trakia University and the provisions of Art. 29 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria

1. Brief introduction of the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Darina Zaimova, PhD, BA completed at Varna University of Economics and MA in Business Administration completed at the same university. (2004). In 2009, she defended her PhD dissertation in the field of Economics and Management (Agriculture).

In 2013, she held the academic position of Associate Professor at Trakia University, Faculty of Economics.

She read disciplines on Innovations and Innovation Policies; Intellectual Property; Organization of Social Enterprises; URR Planning and Forecasting and Planning; Sustainable Development Planning; Social Dynamics of Entrepreneurship; Management of the Entrepreneurial Environment; Leadership and CSR; Social Entrepreneurship; Business Models in the Social Sphere; Business Planning; Quality Management.

She has very good expertise in the field of planning and forecasting entrepreneurship. She has held and continues to hold managerial positions in the management of the university.

She is involved in various large-scale international projects. She has acted as the supervisor of 6 graduate students and one doctoral student.

She is a member of various editorial boards of three international journals, managing structures, participates in scientific forums and in various advisory boards.

She participates in and successfully manages a wide range of national and international projects (leads 4 international projects financed under Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnerships, Marie Curie IAPP, FP7-PEOPLE-2013-IAPP, Horizon Booster Results) and 1 national project (Youth Policies Program in the environmental field), coordinator of 1 national research program and participant in 9 international projects and 4 national projects.

2. General characteristics of the candidate's papers

Prof. Darina Zaimova has 1 monograph; 14 articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with research data; 14 articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes; 7 published chapters of collective monographs.

For the purposes of this competition, 26 citations in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases, 2 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, 5 citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review are presented.

The candidate also has one study aid - "Intellectual Property"

Regarding co-authored articles, all co-authors are correctly represented. The rule of "equal contribution" has been followed – dividing the total number of points by the number of co-authors (/n). I would recommend that we have information about the approach in this case.

The publications submitted for participation in the competition do not repeat those presented for the purpose of acquiring the academic position of "associate professor". With these papers the candidate meets the minimum national requirements.

As far as I am familiar with the policy of some of the publications, I accept that plagiarism is not detected in the publications submitted for the competition and, of course, I rely on the candidate's respect for academic ethics.

The monograph "Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development", Ed. Rainbow +, ISBN 978-619-7251-44-9, 248 pages, 2023 considers the development of the bioeconomy concept, sustainable development and challenges for bio-based business, environmental assessment of products and services, stakeholder theory and social network analysis applied to environmental issues, bioeconomy and sustainability in a regional perspective, food- flavor industry and its role in the bioeconomy of the regions, corporate social responsibility and environmental issues, bioeconomy and the labor market, green financial instruments. These directions were developed in the context of global demographic changes and their corresponding consequences.

The article "Innovative rural development through networks and partnerships", *Trakia Journal of Sciences*, ISSN 1313-7069 (print), ISSN 1313-3551 (online), Vol. 13, Suppl. 1, pp 282-293, 2015, Copyright © 2015 Trakia University, doi:10.15547/tjs.2015.s.01.048, focuses on the conceptualization of an effective model for local development, allowing for more effective organization and interaction between community resources and state support. A number of representative initiatives for innovation and innovative solutions that have emerged at regional level have been analyzed. The importance of developed networks involving local municipalities, for-profit organizations, as well as non-profit organizations and cooperatives that explicitly pursue community well-being and regional identification, is inferred.

The article "Socially responsible business model in Bulgaria: practices at regional and local level." *Trakia Journal of Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2013): 486- 492. explores the need for a new platform to support sustainable business practices by integrating CSR and advancing social innovation across all business functions. As a main goal, the contribution of business to the construction of a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy through the adoption of customer values, transparency, innovative spirit and integrity is highlighted.

The article "Resilience of cooperative entrepreneurial model in time of crisis" *Trakia Journal of Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2013): 516-522.1, presents the understanding and promotion of the characteristics and factors that determine the success of the cooperative and reveals the cooperative model as an important tool for community development and stability in Bulgaria. The paper emphasizes the emergence of cooperative enterprises in various sectors – agriculture, health care, financial services, etc., shows their flexibility and adaptability to the changing environment and especially in times of crisis, as their activities are initiated by the Europe 2020 – a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The article "Ekonomika poljoprivrede 62, no. 1 (2015): 73-93. examines the development of clusters and their specificity regarding rural areas. Clusters are often perceived

not only as models for economic transactions and economic outcomes, but also as social systems and multidisciplinary environmental drivers of change. They occur to similar degrees and provide a common pattern across regions and countries. Differences in patterns across old and new member states and the degree of coverage are commented on.

The article "Determinants and directions of the transition from traditional to sustainable agriculture: The Bulgarian case" in CBU International Conference Proceedings, vol. 7, pp. 75-80. 2019 presents a methodological framework including the guidelines of the transition and the indicators by which it can be assessed. The transition from quantity to quality of production, to sustainability of agriculture, to new business models based on multi-functionality has been assessed. It has been established that the changes in Bulgarian agriculture cannot be assessed unambiguously, and the transition to sustainability is accompanied by continued mechanization and digitalization of technological processes.

The article "Transition and Agricultural Cooperatives in Bulgaria" in CBU International Conference Proceedings, vol. 5, pp. 499-507. 2017, identifies, analyzes and evaluates the reasons for the economic and social changes in the development of agricultural cooperatives in Bulgaria over the past two decades.

The article "Performance evaluation for social enterprises in Bulgaria" in AIP Conference Proceedings, vol. 2186, no. 1, p. 110011. AIP Publishing LLC, 2019, evaluates the effectiveness of four types of social enterprises in Bulgaria – non-profit legal entities, cooperatives for people with disabilities, specialized enterprises for people with disabilities and other social enterprises (cultural centers – community centers)

The article "Efficiency analysis of agricultural cooperatives in trentino-alto adige." Economic Studies 27, no. 4 (2018), is an attempt to evaluate the collective organization of agricultural production as a factor that promotes efficiency (reduced transaction costs; synergies from complementary activities; and improved management and coordination, etc.).

The article "Game development software tools in higher educational institutions: experience of Ukraine, Turkey and Bulgaria" Information Technologies and Learning Tools 78, no. 4 (2020): 90-104, is an analysis of the software tools for development on games in the higher educational establishments in Ukraine (State pedagogical Pereyaslav – Khmelnytskyi University 'Gregory Skovoroda'), Turkey (Kahramanmaraş University Sutçu) and Bulgaria (Trakia University). The results are evidenced from the research conducted by teachers and students from these universities.

The article "Networking Tools in Virtual Exchange for Cooperation at Universities in Bulgaria and Ukraine" Information Technologies and Learning Tools 76, no. 2 (2020): 187-197, presents results from a research on the tools for cooperation within a virtual exchange project between Hryhorii Skovoroda University in Pereiaslav (Ukraine) and Trakia University (Bulgaria), and a specialized course for virtual exchange related to the psychology of energy efficiency for future entrepreneurs and industrial workers is also described.

The article "Agro-energy: growth potential of the green industry", Trakia Journal of Sciences, No 3, pp 175-180, 2022, Copyright © 2022 Trakia University, examines the processes of transition, which result in a completely new way of satisfying public needs, refracted through the lens of a climate strategy and the transition to a decarbonized economy, and respecting the principles of ecological dependence and ecological impact.

The article "Agribusiness Networks in Bulgaria – Design and Creative Problem-Solving." *Economics of Agriculture* 64, no. 2 (2017): 437-450, presents a general framework for evaluating different forms of network structures in the agricultural sector and determines their capacity to counter market constraints and take advantage of agribusiness development opportunities. The methodological framework is based on transaction cost economics and the 4C concept.

The article "Influence of Ovarian Status and Steroid Hormone Concentration on Day of Timed Artificial Insemination (TAI) on the Reproductive Performance of Dairy Cows Inseminated with Sexed Semen" *Animals* 13, no. 5 (2023): 896, evaluates the influence of ovarian status and steroid hormone concentration on the day of TAI on the reproductive performance of dairy cows subjected to estrus synchronization treatment and artificial insemination with sexed semen.

The report "Bioeconomy for sustainable development and well-being, *Trakia Journal of Sciences*, No 2, pp 173-177, 2023 Copyright © 2023 Trakia University, Available online at: <http://www.uni-sz.bg>, ISSN 1313 -3551 (online) doi:10.15547/tjs.2023.02.016, examines emerging challenges and progress in the transition to sustainability, which requires fundamental change in industry, education and science, institutions and society.

The article "Establishment of innovative rural institutions: challenges, problems and good practices", Proceedings from "National agrarian sector – element of the European agricultural regions in Strategy EUROPE- 2020", 6th -7th November 2014, Svishtov, Bulgaria, focuses on the identification of problems and challenges in rural areas, renewing the institutional and administrative potential and accelerating the process of intelligent, sustainable and inclusive development of rural areas.

The report "Innovative development of agribusiness and rural areas – network structures and partnerships", Proceedings from "National agrarian sector – element of the European agricultural regions in Strategy EUROPE-2020", 6th - 7th November 2014, Svishtov, Bulgaria, presents the main types of network structures and partnerships and assesses their opportunities for innovative regional development.

The article "Reviving co-op tradition in the post-socialist Balkan countries (Case of Bulgaria and Serbia)", Selected papers on "Cooperativism in the 21st Century Europe", ISBN: 978-954-305-398-8, analyzes the cooperative movement as a key factor that accumulates capacity and potential to contribute to the development of various sectors, supports economic growth and social welfare. The most promising regulatory mechanisms and financial preferences for stimulating cooperative action, the possible ways to transform the cooperative sector in post-communist countries into a new, dynamic and competition-based structure are examined.

The article "Rural areas and innovation – The collaborative action and potential of academia and business to strengthen cooperative development across Europe", Selected papers on "Cooperativism in the 21st Century Europe", ISBN: 978-954-305-398-8, aims to highlight the initial results of a study which maps the key regional actors and which presents the multifaceted environment of rural areas in Europe.

The article "Towards greening – benefits and challenges of the green revolution, *Journal of Intelligent Animal Husbandry*, ISSN: 2815-4193, reviews the main environmental impacts affected by the implementation of the bioeconomy and sustainable agriculture.

Attention is also paid to the EU Green Program and the impact of its consequences on the quality and efficiency of education and science, the level of entrepreneurship, the adaptability of the market.

The report "Policies for increasing the share of biomass in energy production, International conference on Technics, Technologies and Education ICTTE 2019, ISSN 1314-9474, ISSN 2603-445X (online), page 274-280, analyzes the potential opportunities for implementing the European directives on increasing the use of bioenergy resources in the field of energy production. The state of the Bulgarian energy sector and the current regulatory framework for stimulating the use of renewable energy sources, in particular biomass for energy production, is also analyzed. Conclusions on the necessary measures for the future development of the sector have been formulated.

The article "Cooperative business in Bulgaria." sustainable development and social security of those employed in the agricultural sector: 85. http://oldweb.ltu.bg/jmsd/files/volumes/msd_41.pdf#page=85 considers the cooperative form as a way of carrying out economic activity as a separate type of institutional agreement that exists within the economic system along with other organizations.

The article "Models and Approaches for Assessing Bioeconomic Development" - <https://www.ceeol.com/search/chapter-detail?id=1046971>, collection of reports from a scientific practice-oriented conference with international participation "Innovative development of agrarian business and rural areas", UNWE, Faculty of Economics natural resources", Publishing complex - UNWE, ISBN 978-619-232-477-3, pp.210-217, reviews existing approaches and their potential to contribute to bioeconomic analysis.

The article "The third sector importance: General perspectives and analysis for Bulgaria", CIRIEC WP13/01, ISSN: 2070-8289, assesses the importance, state and development of the third sector in Bulgaria. The theoretical foundations and specific characteristics of the sector are discussed, which distinguish it and define it as a successful way to address social problems and propose appropriate solutions. The economic crisis in Bulgaria and its social impact are examined and an emphasis is placed on how organizations from the third sector to overcome key societal problems that have arisen in recent years.

The report "Eco-entrepreneurship in the perspective of the new common agricultural policy". <https://www.ceeol.com/search/book-detail?id=1045330> looks at important aspects of the CAP and future challenges for farmers.

The article "Organic farming in Bulgaria: some recent evidence and contribution" in International Scientific Meeting. Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Terms of the Republic of Serbia. Strategic Goals Realization within the Danube Region, Preservation of Rural Values. Thematic Proceedings, December 6-8, 2012 Tara, Serbia, pp. 276-292. Institute of Agricultural Economics, 2013, sets itself the task of analyzing organic agriculture in the country, following the latest trends in the legal framework and conditions of production. Considering its ability to effectively combine economic, social and environmental objectives, it is assumed that organic production is clearly recognized in terms of its scope, efficiency and contribution to the pattern of sustainable consumption.

The article "Create a new type of meat pate for preschool and school-age children. The Journal of Almaty Technological University". 2020 (3): 39-44. (in Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.48184/2304-568X-2020-3-39-44> , focuses on the study of meat-added

products with functional properties for children of preschool and school age. Research has been carried out which take into account the combinability of the composition of the ingredients in the creation of quality meat products.

The article "Institutional incentives and economic aspects of industrial relations in the Italian agricultural sector", African Journal of Agricultural Marketing ISSN 2375-1061 Vol. 6 (7), pp. 001-015, July, 2018, aims to conceptualize the agricultural value chain model and shed light on the institutional incentives to organize products and supplies into an integrated and interconnected process. The economic efficiency and competitiveness of strategic partnerships in the form of producer organizations, associations and cooperatives have been analyzed.

The article "Entrepreneurship, industrial policy and clusters in the agrarian sector", XIV Scientific and practical conference "Prerequisites and opportunities for industrial growth in Bulgaria", UNWE, "Industrial business, p.153-163, examines the possible means and mechanisms of support of the cluster initiatives in the agrarian sector as a successful approach to stimulate regional advantages, equal distribution of economic activity and access to international markets.

The report "Mapping Cooperative Systems and Sustainable Rural Development Initial Results from the EU Project "Cooperative business and innovative rural development: Synergies between commercial and academic partners" (C-BIRD)" © April 2015 ACADEMIC PUBLISHING, Trakia University ISBN9 78-954-338 -112-8, available at: <http://c-bird.eu/index.php/resources/publications>, aims to clarify the critical elements of the institutional system, knowledge mechanisms and policy instruments in terms of their specific characteristics, limitations and opportunities. Four interrelated components are considered as an important part of the process: actors in rural development and the relationships emerging at institutional and civic levels; cooperative and business environment factors and specific constraints; enabling institutional support (including local government, community support) and sources of positive change, and finally economic, social and environmental trends.

The report "Narratives, Evidence, Case Studies of Existing or Developing Practices for Agri-Entrepreneurship in HE", Academic Publishing – Trakia University, ISBN: 978-954-338-168-5, 2020, considers entrepreneurial drive as a key element in the promotion process of rural/regional economic development, generating capacity, strengthening social capital and stimulating proactive thinking.

The report "Renewable energy teaching approaches, methods, and techniques, HED-RES-EU METHODOLOGY", Academic Publishing TrU, ISBN: 978-954-338-203-3, 2022, presents original experience and information on business and market development trends of labor, the necessary competences and knowledge, as well as the available educational and research programmes

The paper "State of art HED-RES-EU, Academic Publishing TrU, ISBN: 978-954-338-213-2, 2024 synthesizes and analyzes the current state and processes in the educational system and the level of preparation in the field of renewable energy sources, green energy and related sectors. The material includes current trends in the education system, training models and sharing of good practices, an overview of the labor market situation (employment, education and training).

The article DIGI-Key Training Needs Analysis, ISBN: 978-954-338-211-8 (pdf), ISBN: 978-954-338-212-5 (CD), 2022, presents a developed innovative and competitive

training program, corresponding to the modern digital information literacy, and an e-learning course for university students

The article “Analysis and profile of the state and potential of a regional bioeconomy”, Academic Publishing House, University of Thrace, ISBN 978-954-338-164-7, 2020, examines the state of the regional bioeconomy in the context of challenges related to food security, the protection of biodiversity, climate change and the need to adapt to it.

Chapter XII “Prerequisites, possibilities and scenarios for structural changes of agricultural holdings and the infrastructural network basis”. <https://plus.cobiss.net/cobiss/bg/bg/bib/53768456#full> from the collection “Sustainable multifunctional rural areas: rethinking the models and systems of agriculture in the face of increased demands and limited resources”, looks at the possibilities for the development of rural areas as part of the restructuring of the economy and a new model for the development of the agrarian sector.

3. Concrete significance of contributions for science and practice

The review of the papers submitted for the competition by Assoc. Prof. Darina Zaimova, PhD, proves that they meet the research standards.

On the basis of the obtained results, the candidate has formulated five main contributions, each of which is adequately defended, namely:

1. Social economy and social entrepreneurship
 - with a renewed contribution to the assertion and development of the research field of "social economy" and "social entrepreneurship", its integration into the research process of other scientific fields, and its introduction as a study discipline.
2. Cooperatives and cooperative business model
 - with a major contribution – formulation and implementation of an integrated approach in the analysis and evaluation of cooperative organizations and their development
3. Sustainable development, bioeconomy, circular economy
 - with a basic analysis of long-term transformations and changes in socio-economic systems, agriculture, extraction of natural resources, efficient use of renewable energy sources, production and consumption models. Analysis of theoretical models that change the understanding of the nature and problems of sustainability
4. Environmental entrepreneurship and business practices
 - with a major contribution – research of the possibilities for modifying production systems, diversifying production types, and the sources of additional investments.
5. Digitalization and new technologies
 - with a major contribution – integration of the possibilities of digital innovations in target sectors by means of adapting/profiling the necessary social capital/human resources to the new technologies

Out of all the mentioned contributions, I accept the following as the main theoretical ones:

- Social economy and social entrepreneurship
- Sustainable development, bioeconomy, circular economy

Cooperatives and cooperative business model and ecological entrepreneurship and business practices can be also be incorporated in the first main stream.

- Digitalization and new technologies are more of a practical contribution, taking into account the fact that this is a core community priority and a horizontal policy.

4. Critical notes, recommendations and questions

I have the following notes and recommendations. The first note is related to the way the materials were presented for the competition. Regardless of the fact that the documents are organized very well and give the impression of careful preparation, there is no settlement protocol for the submitted co-authored works, and I believe that this is pre-agreed and reflected in the table accordingly.

The second note concerns the wide range of scientific research (part of it outside social innovation and social entrepreneurship) which gives the impression of a dose of migrating scientific focus. It would be good to prioritize the candidate's area of expertise, which she undoubtedly has, and focus her efforts there. This, of course, does not exclude additional accompanying scientific research.

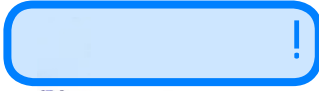
5. Conclusion

Regardless of the notes and recommendations made, the publications submitted by the candidate undoubtedly prove the quality of her work and her research expertise. The candidate demonstrates a very good knowledge of theoretical and practical issues and accuracy in referencing the publications used.

Based on the works presented for the competition and her teaching activity, Assoc. Prof. Darina Zaimova, PhD, demonstrates the qualities of a responsible researcher and teacher.

All this gives me reason to recommend to the esteemed research jury to award Assoc. Prof. Darina Zaimova, PhD, the academic position of "professor" in professional field 3.8. Economics and Management (Economics and Business Entrepreneurship) at Trakia University – Stara Zagora.

1/11/2023
Sofia

Reviewer: 
Prof. Albena Vutsova, PhD