



## OPINION

By: assoc. prof. dr. Petia Hristomirova Branzova,

Scientific field 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", Professional direction 3.8. "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agrarian Economics)" Economic Research Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Subject: competition for "professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Economics and Business, Entrepreneurship)", professional direction 3.8. "Economics", scientific field 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences"

### 1. Information about the contest

The competition was announced for the needs of the "Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship" department at the Faculty of Economics of the Trakiya University, announced in SG No. 52/16.06.2023. I participate in the composition of the scientific jury for the competition according to Order No. 3133/19.09.2023. of the Rector of Trakiya University.

### 2. Brief information about the candidate in the competition

The only candidate for the position of "professor" according to the announced competition published in SG No. 52/16.06.2023 for the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Economics and Business, Entrepreneurship)", professional direction 3.8. "Economics", scientific field 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences" is assoc. prof. dr. Darina Georgieva Zaimova. Darina Zaimova received her bachelor's degree in "Business Administration" in 2002, and in 2004 she received her master's degree in "Business Administration" at the University of Economics- Varna. During the period 2005 - 2008, Darina Zaimova was a full-time phd student at Trakiya University, Faculty of Economics, Department of "Management", and at the end of the period, she successfully defended her dissertation on "Producer Organizations" (On the example of South Central and South Eastern planning area). Dr. Darina Zaimova held the position of assistant at Trakiya University, Faculty of Economics, Department of "Management" in the period 2009-2012, in 2012, she was elected to the position of "associate professor" at the same university.

Darina Zaimova was a post-doctoral student in the period 2010-2011. at the European Research Institute for Cooperative and Social Enterprises - EURICSE, Trento, Italy, held a number of administrative positions such as: Head of the Projects Department at Trakiya University; Steering Committee Representative COST TARGET NETWORK TN1302, "The Voice of Research Administrators - Building a Network for Administrative Excellence (BESTPRAC)"; Member of the advisory board of the "Center for Research and Analysis", Deputy Rector for Project Activities at Trakiya University; Deputy Rector for International Activities at Pavlodar State Pedagogical University, Pavlodar, Kazakhstan; Currently, she is the Deputy Head of the Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship Department and the Deputy Rector for Scientific and International Activities at Trakiya University, as well as the Chairman of the Management Board GO-UP Business Incubator.

The candidate has specializations in Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Hungary, Serbia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Poland, etc. She is part of the editorial boards of three international journals. Participates in the team of the Council for Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy at the BAS and the Commission for the Development and Implementation of Innovations and the Circular and Bio-Based Economy at the Ministry of Economy and Growth. Assoc. prof. dr. Darina Zaimova is the head of 4

international projects and 1 national project, coordinator of 1 national scientific program, participant in 9 international projects, and participant in 4 national projects.

### **3. Fulfillment of the requirements for occupying the academic position "professor"**

To participate in the competition, assoc.prof. dr. Darina Georgieva Zaimova submits as follows - 1 successfully defended dissertation for the award of the ESD "Doctor"; 1 monograph; 14 articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information; 14 articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes; 7 published chapters of collective monographs. The noticed citations on scientific works are nearly 80, of which, for the purposes of this competition, 26 citations are presented in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases, 2 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, 5 citations in non-refereed journals with scientific reviewing.

Under item B, 1 monographic work entitled "Bioeconomy and sustainable development" of 248 pages is included, dedicated to current issues such as the development of the concept of bioeconomy, sustainable development and challenges to bio-based business, ecological assessment of products and services, stakeholder theory and social network analysis applied to environmental issues, bioeconomy and sustainability in a regional perspective, food industry and its role in the bioeconomy of regions, corporate social responsibility and environmental issues, bioeconomy and the labor market, green financial instruments.

Under item D, 35 publications are presented, fourteen of which are articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information. Fourteen of the submitted publications are articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes. Seven of the presented publications are chapters of a collective monograph. According to this indicator, Darina Zaimova reaches 251.6 points out of 200 minimum required. As a result of the presented reference, it can be concluded that the publication activity of assoc. prof. Zaimova fully meets the requirements for the growth of the academic staff.

Regarding the citationability, item D, of dr. Zaimova, it should be noted that the citations submitted for the announced competition significantly exceed the required minimum, with 435 points being counted for this indicator, out of the required 100 points.

Regarding the indicators from group E, assoc.prof. Zaimova presents 525p. of the minimum required 100. Of these, she has successfully defended her PhD student, participated in: five national projects, one of which she is the leader of; nine international project, of which she is the head of four, has published an independent student book.

Under item G, the candidate submits 155 points out of the required 100 points. Assoc.prof. dr. Zaimova is the leading teacher of 8 of the academic disciplines provided for the competition and of 6 of the disciplines she is the leader of seminars, exercises and practices. For the period 2014-2023 Dr. Zaimova provides a reference for 6 successfully defended graduate students in the "Bachelor's" and "Master's" programs. There are also participations in international scientific forums, memberships in editorial boards and expert activities.

Up to the time of preparation of the opinion, there were no reports of copyright violations and no coincidences with scientific works and publications of other authors were found.

All indicators are met, with dr. Zaimova presenting 1516.6 points out of the required 650. This shows the candidate as a multifaceted expert in a number of fields that broaden the horizons of both the research, teaching and scientific fields.

#### **4. Synthesized assessment of the candidate's teaching and learning activities**

During her career, assoc. prof. dr. Darina Zaimova has developed lecture courses that prove the available qualities of the candidate for the academic position of "professor". The lecture courses (14) are directed in various directions, such as innovation and innovation policy, intellectual property, organization of social enterprises, planning and forecasting, URR planning, sustainable development planning, entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, business planning, quality management etc. The exact names of the disciplines are correctly described in the documents provided by the applicant and evidentiary material is presented. The disciplines are presented to bachelors and masters. She gave lecture courses, lectures, training courses in Bulgaria and abroad.

#### **5. Synthesized assessment of the main scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the candidate**

In the scientific production of dr. Darina Zaimova, 5 main thematic directions could be distinguished. The first of them is dedicated to social economy and social entrepreneurship. In the publications of assoc. prof. Zaimova, the topic related to cooperatives and the cooperative business model is also explored. Of interest is a group of publications studying sustainable development, bioeconomy, circular economy. The works of dr. Zaimova, which touch on current issues and are aimed at ecological entrepreneurship and business practices, as well as digitalization and new technologies, also deserve high praise. The documentation proves the presence of sufficient volume and quality of contributions for the announced competition. The main contributions can be summarized as follows:

- The overview and empirical studies conducted, the published results, their promotion at scientific forums, the creation of new curricula and the development of study courses are a contribution to the consolidation and development of the scientific field of "social economy" and "social entrepreneurship", its integration into the scientific research process of other scientific fields, and its introduction as a study discipline.
- An integrated approach to the analysis and evaluation of cooperative organizations and their development has been formulated and implemented.
- Theoretical models that change the understanding of the nature and problems of sustainability are analyzed.
- The possibilities for modifying the production systems, for diversifying production types, and the sources of additional investments were investigated.
- Integrating the possibilities of digital innovations in target sectors by adapting/profiling the necessary social capital/human resource to the new technologies.

These and other achievements and contributions give reason to claim that assoc. prof. Darina Zaimova possesses all the necessary qualities of an established scientist, researcher and teacher who is part of the Bulgarian and European scientific community.

#### **6. Main critical remarks and recommendations to the candidate**

I have no critical notes. I have a recommendation for dr. Darina Zaimova to continue with the same determination and research responsibility to enrich her research and teaching activities and to study current and significant problems for science and practice in the sphere of her competence.

#### **7. Personal impressions of the reviewer about the candidate**

I know assoc. prof. dr. Zaimova, her publication activity and her scientific interests from our joint work on a national scientific program. My impressions of her are that she is organized, consistent and accurate in her work, approaches it responsibly and competently, and has long-standing scientific interests. Through her research activity, dr. Zaimova reached results significant for science and practice, which gives her the opportunity to establish herself as an authoritative researcher and scientist.



## 8. Conclusion

Based on the assessment of teaching and research activities and scientific production, the candidate's presented competencies, scientific and scientific-applied contributions, I believe that Associate Professor Darina Zaimova fully meets the requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor", set out in all the criteria of the requirements, the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (LASDRB) and conducting competitions for obtaining a degree for academic positions at Trakiya university the Faculty of Economics. She is a built scientist and teacher with undoubted scientific and teaching-methodical achievements, standing out with her erudition, qualification and professionalism. All this gives me a reason to positively evaluate the overall activity of assoc. prof. dr. Darina Zaimova and with full conviction to support her candidacy for the academic position of "professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Economics and Business, Entrepreneurship) ", professional direction 3.8. "Economics", scientific field 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences" at the Department of "Industrial Business and Entrepreneurship" at the Faculty of Economics of Trakiya University.

30.10.2023/ Sofia

Signature.....  
assoc.prof.dr. Petia Branzova

