

## OPINION

according to a competition for the academic position occupation „PROFESSOR“ in the field of higher education in the higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, in a professional direction 4.2. Chemical Sciences, announced in State Gazette No. 7/ 23.01.2023 with candidate: Associate Professor Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D., Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Pharmacy " at Medical University, Varna.

Prepared the opinion: Associate Professor Galina Dimitrova Nikolova, Ph.D. Medical Faculty, Trakia University, Stara Zagora.

### 1. General presentation of the materials received for review.

The competition for the occupation of the academic position "PROFESSOR" and the procedure for its implementation are based on the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria; The Regulations for the Implementation of the ZRASRB and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Medical University, Varna. Only one candidate participated in the competition: Albena Vasileva Merdjanova, Ph.D., Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Medicine, Varna.

The set of materials presented to me for the competition is in accordance with the Decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Pharmacy (**Protocol No. 71 of 28.02.2024**) and Order No. **R-109-94 of 21.03.2024** of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna , amended by **Order No. R-109-94/05.04.2024**, according to which I was elected as a member of the scientific jury. The applications submitted by the candidate Assoc. Prof Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D. and the materials participating in the competition comply with the normative documents and meet the criteria for occupying the "PROFESSOR" academic position.

*The following are presented in the competition:*

- 1 monograph titled "Biologically active fatty acids in human health support", Medical University Publishing House - Varna, 2023, ISBN 978-619-221-455-5, Merdzhanova A. 2023.
- 22 publications: 18 referenced in Scopus and Web of Science, 1 published in an indexed edition, and 3 published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or conference proceedings without IF and SJR (not indexed). In 4 of the studies presented for the competition, the candidate is the first author with a major contribution to conducting the experiment, processing the results, their analysis, and writing the article, and in 6 he is a corresponding author with a major contribution to the ideology, methodology, and analysis of the results. Submitted publications cover the period 2018-2023, as well as articles not submitted for the "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" competition.
- List of 37 participations in national and international scientific forums;
- Reference, issued by the Library of the University of Varna, on the number of citations in Web of Science and SCOPUS of the scientific publications of Assoc. Prof. Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D. with 52 citations out of 300 without self-citations in international sources;

- List of participations in research projects: in one project under a national program as a project manager; in the project under national programs as a participant -8 projects; in international scientific projects -2 projects.

The citation index is h-index = 8 (Scopus) and h-index = 7 (Web of Science). The total impact factor of all publications for the entire creative period is 56,808.

## **2. Personal and professional data about the candidate**

The only candidate in the competition, Assoc. Professor Albena Vasileva Merdjanova, Ph.D., graduated from HTMU-Sofia in 1993 with a Master's degree in "engineering - biotechnology". In 2014, she obtained a PhD thesis in the specialty "Bioorganic Chemistry, Chemistry of Natural and Physiologically Active Substances", MU-Varna, and in 2016 she defended her Master's degree in "Organic Chemistry" at the "Episcopo Konstantin Preslavsky", Shumen University. Since 2018, she has been elected as an "associate professor", in "Chemistry", faculty "Pharmacy" at MU "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov" - Varna and holds this academic position to this day.

During the period of her academic growth, Associate Professor Albena Vasileva Merdjanova, Ph.D. has acquired postgraduate specialization in the field of health care at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov"-Varna in "Theoretical Foundations of Medicinal Chemistry". The candidate's education and professional development are related to the fatty acid composition and lipid profile of marine and plant origin and other biological samples. In the scientific developments presented, the main emphasis is aimed at improving the quality of life - food, health, and biodiversity and is in line with the objectives of priority strategic documents.

Research in the field of food quality and safety and their potential effects on human health is in line with the main sub-goals of the Council of Ministers for "Confirming the achieved positive changes in the national food model and achieving new ones aimed at reducing the risk of nutritional deficiencies and chronic nutrition-related diseases and improving the provision of foods that contribute to a healthy eating pattern, as well as ensuring wide access to them by the whole population". The European Union (EU) has strict standards and legislation that regulate food safety, and Bulgaria must observe and comply with these legal requirements. This requires regular research of chemical composition, essential and toxic elements, and other biologically active compounds that contribute to the quality of food and indirectly to the health of consumers.

## **3. Evaluation of the candidate's scientific and scientific-applied activity**

### **3.1. Assessment of compliance with national scientometric indicators for the academic position "PROFESSOR"**

From the report on the implementation of the minimum national requirements and the additional requirements defined in the PRAS at the Medical University - Varna, prepared by Assoc. Prof. Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D. and the presented evidentiary material, it is clear that

Assoc Prof Merdjanova exceeds the minimum national scientometric indicators for the academic position "Professor": the number of points for the candidate is 766, against the required 600.

**Table 1. Minimum required points by groups of indicators for the different scientific degrees and positions of assoc. prof. Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D.**

Group of indicators	Contents	Professor	assoc. prof. Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D.
A1	Thesis for the acquisition of the PhD	50	50
B3	Habilitation thesis - Monograph	100	100
Г7	Scientific publ. in publications referenced and indexed Web of Science and Scopus	100	298
Д11	Citations in Web of Science and Scopus	200	104
E	The sum of indicators E12-E20	50	214
		600	766

### 3.2. Characteristics of the candidate's scientific contributions

The scientific research and scientific-applied activity of Associate Professor Albena Vasileva Merdjanova, Ph.D. is purposefully conducted in the direction of improving the quality of life - food, health, and biodiversity. In the presented reference, the candidate describes in detail the contributions contained in her work, covering five main areas:

- Quality and composition of Black Sea and freshwater organisms (fish, shellfish, etc.)
- Effect of heat treatment on the composition and quality of marine and freshwater organisms as food
- Safety of marine and freshwater organisms
- Evaluation of the "benefit - risk" ratio when consuming Black Sea organisms
- Study of the changes in the content of free and bound fatty acids (FFA) in blood serum in connection with the study of metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular pathologies.

The researches carried out, included in the scientific works, have contributions of a scientific and scientific-applied nature. For the realization of this research work, Assoc. Prof. Albena Merdzhanova, Ph.D. has accumulated a lot of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and competencies.

#### 4. Assessment of the candidate as a teacher

Assoc. A. Merdjanova, Ph.D., is an established university teacher, who actively participates in the educational activities of the "Pharmacy" Faculty, by leading exercises, and delivering lectures to students from the Medicine, Dentistry, Medical Laboratory, and Assistant Pharmacist. She participates in conducting semester exams and developing curricula for the disciplines "Inorganic Chemistry" for students Assistant Pharmacist, and "Inorganic and Organic Chemistry" for students Medical Laboratory.

#### CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by the only candidate in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D., meets all the requirements of the ZRASRB, the Regulations for the Implementation of the ZRASRB, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Varna. In terms of scientific activity, Assoc. Prof. Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D., has presented sufficient scientific works.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific and scientific-applied contributions contained in them, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty "Pharmacy" for the election of Assoc. Dr. Albena Vasileva Merdzhanova, Ph.D. for the academic position "Professor" in higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, in a professional direction 4.2. Chemical Sciences, Faculty of Pharmacy, Medical University - Varna.

07.05.2024r.

Prepared:

/assoc. prof. G. Nikolova, Ph.D./

Заличено на основание чл. 5,  
§1, б. „В“ от Регламент (ЕС)  
2016/679