

OPINION

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REGARDING: competition for taking up the academic position "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" in higher education field 7. Healthcare and sport, professional field 7.1 Medicine, scientific specialization "Hygiene (including occupational, communal, school, radiation, etc.)" for the needs of at the Department of "Hygiene and Epidemiology", Medical University - Varna.

I. GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE PROCEDURE

Pursuant to Order of the Rector № P-109-443/05.12.2024 y. of Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna I have been elected as an external member of the Scientific Jury under the procedure for occupying the academic position "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR", higher education field 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1. Medicine (Hygiene) at the Department of "Hygiene and Epidemiology", Faculty of Public Health, Medical University - Varna.

In the competition announced in the State Gazette, issue 85 from 08.10.24, for the position of Associate Professor in "Hygiene (including occupational, communal, school, radiation, etc.)," the sole candidate is Dr. Albena Borisova Toneva, MD, PhD, Chief Assistant in the same department.

Dr. Albena Borisova Toneva, has presented all necessary documents in compliance with the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupancy of Academic Positions at Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna for participation in the open competition. This opinion has been drawn up on the basis of the documents submitted by the candidate.

II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANDIDATE

Dr. Albena Borisova Toneva was born in the city of Ruse, where she graduated at the High School "Hristo Botev" in 1982. Dr. Toneva is a graduate of the Higher Medical University in Varna. In 1989, she obtained the educational and qualification degree "Master" with very good results in medicine. From 1989 to 2011, she worked at the Regional Health Inspectorate (RHI) – Varna, where she held positions such as resident doctor, head of a sector, and Director of the "Health Control" Directorate. From 2011 to 2014, she was the head of the "Food Control" Department at the Regional Directorate for Food Safety – Varna. Since 2015, she has been an

assistant, and since 2020, she has been a chief assistant at the Department of "Hygiene and Epidemiology," Medical University – Varna.

She has a recognized medical specialty in "Nutrition and Dietetics" (2002) and additional qualification in homeopathic therapy (2002).

In 2019, she defended a dissertation titled "Nutritional Status of Children with Neuropsychiatric Disorders and its Connection with the Quality of Life of Parents and Caregivers" and obtained the academic and scientific degree "Doctor".

The candidate has a written and spoken knowledge of English, German and Russian English. Dr. Toneva is a member of the Bulgarian Medical Association, the Bulgarian Society of Nutrition and Dietetics, the Bulgarian Society of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition, the Bulgarian Association for Public Health, the European Public Health Association, and the Scientific Group for Early Childhood Development at the Early Childhood Development Alliance.

The records of Dr AlbenaToneva indicate that candidate has met the minimal national requirements (MIN) pursuant to Art 2b. part 5 under Art. 2b, par. 5 of the ADASRB for taking up the academic position "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR", as it can be seen in the table below (Table 1).

Table № 1. Reference for compliance with minimum national requirements

Group of indicators	Content	Associate Professor (number of points)	Points of Dr. Toneva, MD, PhD
A	Indicator 1	50	50
B	Indicators 3 or 4	100	100
G	Group of indicators from 5 to 9	200	215,57
D	Group of indicators from 10 to 12	50	60
E	Group of indicators from 13 to the end	-	-

III. SCHOLARLY ACTI V I T Y

In this competition, Dr. Toneva participates with **25** publications and reports, including **9** publications refereed and indexed in world-renowned scientific databases, including Scopus and Web of Science, and **16** articles in non-refereed scientific journals and edited conference proceedings, 1 dissertation, 1 thesis summary, 1 monograph (habilitation thesis), 62 participations in national and international scientific forums, and 5 citations in Bulgarian and foreign sources.

The monograph presented on the topics: "Nutritional Aspects of the 'Silent Pandemic' – Autism and Cerebral Palsy," 2024 ISBN – 978-619-221-479-1 (167 pages) addresses a current public health issue related to the increasing prevalence of neuropsychiatric disorders in children and adolescents worldwide. The candidate has conducted an in-depth scientific analysis of the nutritional challenges in children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and the need for appropriate nutritional interventions, based on a systematic review of scientific literature and her own research and clinical experience. The monograph discusses the nutritional issues in children with autism and cerebral palsy. It highlights the macro and micronutrient status and potential nutritional deficiencies in these children, as well as the impact of maternal nutrition on early brain development and the risk of future cognitive and behavioral disorders.

The total number of citations with which Dr. Toneva participates in this competition is 5, of which 3 citations is in a referred and indexed journal in world-famous databases with scientific information (Scopus and Web of Science), 1 in a monograph and collective volumes and 2 in non-referred journals.

The author records of Dr Toneva shows that the scientific output is focused on seven main strands: nutrition, nutritional status, and neuropsychic development of children; oral status of children; allergic diseases in children; nutrition during pregnancy and breastfeeding; quality of life; biofoods; and official food control and hospital-acquired infections. A significant portion of Dr. Toneva's scientific contributions are innovative with a scientific-applied and methodological character. The main contributions of the candidate are related to the assessment of the nutritional status of children with neuropsychiatric disorders through biochemical markers and anthropometric indicators and indexes according to the standards and criteria of the WHO (2006, 2007) and the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ASPEN) (2015), and its correlation with their oral status and nutritional challenges. An original scientific contribution is the determination of the type of bite in children with neuropsychiatric disorders as an etiological factor for disturbances in their nutrition and its connection with malnutrition.

For the current competition, Dr. Toneva has enclosed a list of participations in prestigious forums in Bulgaria and abroad with a total number of 62 scientific communications, including posters and oral reports.

Dr. Toneva is involved in 4 scientific projects of national and international significance, as follows: CD-skills project - Danube transnational interreg program 01.07.2020-31.12.2022; COMISS - Testing a questionnaire for point-of-care screening of symptoms related to potential cow's milk protein allergy (COMISS) in healthy infants aged 6

to 12 months; EU - NextGenerationEU, through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria, project No. BG-RRP-2.004-0009-C02 Enhancing Translational Achievements in Medicine (MUVE-TEAM) – Nutrillect, 2023-2026; and Project No. 22025 "Molecular Biomarkers in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder" Science Fund, 2023-2026.

IV. EDUCATIONAL AND TEACHING ACTIVITY

Pursuant to the report, presented by Dr. Toneva, the candidate has a total of 34 years and 10 months work experience, of which 9 years and 1 month are in teaching activity. Dr. Toneva's teaching experience includes conducting lessons on "Hygiene and Ecology" for medical students and those in the specialties of "Dental Technician" and "Rehabilitation Therapist." Dr. Toneva teaches the following courses: "Environment, Nutrition, and Health," "Hygiene of Nutrition," "Nutrition for Children with Swallowing Difficulties," "Food Safety. Food Legislation," "Communal Hygiene," "Hygiene of Childhood and Adolescence," "Hygiene and Ecology of Healthcare Institutions," "Hygiene of Medical Institutions and Hospital Infections," and "Modern Concepts in the Design of Healthcare Facilities," as per the curriculum of various master's and bachelor's degree programs.

The total workload of Dr. Albena Toneva in the past 5 years is as follows:

- Completed teaching hours for the finalized 5 academic years - (2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022, 2022/2023, 2023/2024) – a total of 1817 hours general engagement, averaging 363.4 hours per year, which fully complies with the annual norm set by MU-Varna.

All of the above, gives me a serious reason to accept that Dr. Toneva a fully established lecturer in the specialty "Hygiene" with extensive professional experience and high general medical and specialized qualifications in various areas of hygiene science.

V. CONSULTANCY AND SCHOLARLY APPLIED ACTIVITY

Dr. Albena Toneva popularized the results of her scientific research during the European Public Health Week, held in 2022 and 2023.

Dr. Toneva is the supervisor of 6 trainees in the specialty "Nutrition and Dietetics". Chief Assistant Toneva provides consultative and methodological assistance to medical students and trainees in nutrition and dietetics regarding their participation in national and international scientific forums and the preparation of scientific publications.

CONCLUSION

Based on the materials presented for the competition I can say that Assist. Prof. Dr. Albena Borisova Toneva, MD, PhD possesses the relevant scholarly achievements, teaching experience and professional competence, which correspond to the requirements for taking up the academic position "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR", according to ADASRB the Regulations

on the Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and the Occupancy of Academic Positions at the Varna University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov".

Therefore, I give my positive assessment with conviction and propose to the members of the Scientific Jury to award the academic title "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" to Dr. Albena Borisova Toneva, MD, PhD in the specialty "Hygiene (including occupational, communal, school, radiation, etc.)" for the needs of at the Department of „Hygiene and Epidemiology" Faculty of Public Health, Varna University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov".

18.02.2025

Yours sincerely:

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