

STATEMENT

by Prof. Lora Hristova Georgieva, MD, PhD

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Regarding: Competition for acquiring an academic position „*Associate Professor*” in the area of higher education: *7. Healthcare and Sports*, professional field: *7.4. Public Health*, specialty: *Public Health Management*, for the needs of the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization, at the Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna, announced in State Gazette, issue 53/12.06.2020.

In the Scientific Jury in the present competition I was included according to Order №P-109-303/7.08.2020 of the Rector of the Medical University of Varna.

In accordance with Protocol №1/25.08.2020 from the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, I was stated to prepare a statement for the procedure.

The only candidate in the present competition is Silviya Pavlova Nikolova, PhD, Chief Assistant Professor.

All the needed documents and references were submitted in accordance with the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its application and the Regulations for Development of the Academic Staff at MU-Varna.

Biographical data and career development of the candidate

Silvia Pavlova Nikolova was born in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. She graduated from the High School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics „Geo Milev” in the field of Biology and advanced study of English language, in her native town. She successively obtained a Bachelor's degree (2005) and a Master's degree (2006) in Health Management at the Medical University of Varna and a Master's degree in Special Pedagogy (2007) at Sofia University.

From August 2007 to 2009 she worked and studied in a Master's research programme in Social Sciences at the University of Nuevo Leon, Monterey, Mexico.

During the period 2009-2013 she was a PhD student in a bilateral doctoral programme at the University of Nuevo Leon, Mexico and the University of Texas, Arlington, USA. The dissertation titled „*Geography of disability. An analysis based on the socioeconomic levels of two metropolitan areas: Dallas, Texas and Monterrey, Nuevo Leon*” won both a scholarship for best dissertation, and the first place in 2014 in a national competition in the United States for research on the problems of people with disabilities. According to Certificate №109-258/1.07.2015 from MU-Varna, the candidate has a recognized educational and scientific degree of Doctor in the specialty of Public Health Management.

Since 2014 Silvia Nikolova has been working as an Assistant Professor, and since 2016 as a Chief Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization at MU-Varna. Along with her teaching activities, she is a team member of the International Center for Electronic and Distance Learning at MU-Varna.

She is fluent in English and Spanish.

Evaluation of scientific work

For participation in the competition 22 full-text scientific works are being presented and distributed as follows:

- Habilitation work - monograph (**Indicator B-3**): 1.
- Publications and reports in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information (**Indicator G-7**): 8.
- Publications and reports in unrefereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes (**Indicator G-8**): 10.
- Published chapter of a collective monograph (**Indicator G-9**): 3.

The articles have been published in prestigious journals: International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health, Journal of HIV/AIDS and Social Services, AIDS and Behavior, Metabolic Syndrome and Related Disorders, International Journal of Biomedical and Advance Research, International Journal of Medical and Health Research, Folia Medica, Varna Medical Forum, Sports and Science, Practical Pediatrics, etc.

The candidate is a single or first author in 6 publications, in 6 she is a second author, which shows initiative and a strong position in scientific research. A significant part of the scientific production is in English or Spanish.

Three publications are on a separate list other than those involved as evidence to meet the minimum requirements.

Scientific papers and their contributions can be grouped into the following main areas:

1. Inequalities faced by people with disabilities.

The leading scientific interest of Silvia Nikolova undoubtedly are the problems of people with disabilities, which she has been studying for many years on a wide population base in Mexico, the USA and Bulgaria.

In the independent monograph „*Metaaspects of disabilities*“ (published by MU-Varna in 2020) the impact of environmental factors on the frequency of disabilities in a given society was analyzed, various spatial models were tested that show „hot spots“ with a high concentration of people with disabilities in certain areas in Bulgaria related to unfavorable economic status.

A critical analysis was made of the first programme of specialized care for people with disabilities in Mexico (article in Spanish).

The nutrition and dental health of children with neuropsychiatric disabilities, the lack of physical activity, the attitude of society towards people with disabilities were studied.

2. Sex inequalities and health risk in Africa.

The study of unhealthy practices is of interest, such as genital mutilation, on the female population in African countries.

A systematic review was made for the first time, highlighting the role of men for the success of health interventions targeting women at risk of HIV infection.

The challenges facing women living in underdeveloped countries in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic were discussed.

3. Health promotion and motivation of students.

The health of students and pupils was analyzed both in a positive (influence of folk dances in Bulgaria) and in a negative (school bullying and harmful uses in Malawi) aspect.

4. Interdisciplinary research.

Participation in interdisciplinary research teams has resulted in a number of publications with original contributions on the role of different biomarkers.

The presentation of a methodology for the professors' work in the online environment, electronic exam and assessment, is among the few publications in the Bulgarian scientific literature on this topic and is especially valuable in the current conditions, requiring compliance with social distance.

The active scientific profiles in Google Scholar, ORCID and ResearchGate contribute to the popularization of Silvia Nikolova's scientific developments.

A reference from the Library of MU-Varna indicates 35 citations in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information, which cover and exceed the minimum requirements (**Indicator D-10**).

The total impact factor is 15.688 - from 9 articles (including 6 submitted in the competition for Chief Assistant Professor).

Silviya Nikolova was actively involved in international scientific and educational projects (**Indicator E-17**):

- Regional Partnership for Health and Sustainable Development (Ministry of Health; Program BG07 „Public Health Initiatives”; Partnership with the Ostfold region of Norway in the field of public health), 2017.
- Prevalence and patterns of non-communicable disease-related disabilities in the US (Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange), 2018-2019.

The Fulbright scholarship for the 2018/2019 academic year is a proof of serious research abilities.

Apart from the projects submitted for the competition, she also works in other long-term research projects.

The candidate regularly participates in scientific forums – a list of 32 reports and posters for the period 2003-2019 is presented, where her predominantly leading position in the author teams is impressive.

Evaluation of methodological and teaching work

Chief Assistant Professor Nikolova has nearly 6 years of teaching experience at MU-Varna. She conducts seminars for students in Bulgarian and English language programmes, with an average workload of over 450 hours per year, which exceeds the mandatory norm. The classes include the following disciplines: Biostatistics, Social Medicine, and Medico-social aspects of disabilities.

Since 01.01.2020 she has acquired a specialty (**Indicator E-15**) of Medical Informatics and Health Management.

She has supervised two master theses in the Master's programmes „Public Health“ and „Health Management and Medico-social Care“.

She provides dedicated methodological assistance to colleagues and PhD students in their research, especially for data processing, statistical analysis, and interpretation of the results.


She conducts collective and individual training on working in an electronic environment on the Blackboard platform as a member of the team of the International Center for Electronic and Distance Learning at MU-Varna. She is always available to respond to questions of teachers and students.

Conclusion

The scientific production and teaching activity of Silvia Nikolova meet the conditions and criteria for obtaining the academic position „Associate Professor“, in accordance with the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its application and the requirements of the Medical University of Varna. The presented scientific work is sufficient in quantity and covers a wide range of interesting topics. The candidate has research and academic experience in the country and abroad, high potential and remarkable diligence.

All this gives me a reason for a positive assessment and to propose to the members of the honourable Scientific Jury - Chief Assistant Professor Silvia Pavlova Nikolova to take the academic position „Associate Professor“ in the specialty of Public Health Management, for the needs of the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization, at the Faculty of Public Health of the Medical University of Varna.

5.10.2020
Varna

Member of the Scientific Jury: 
/ Prof. L. Georgieva, MD, PhD /