

Statement
by Associate Professor Desislava Vankova, MD, MPH, PhD
Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna,
Member of the Scientific Jury with Order № P-109-303/07.08. 2020,
of the Rector of Medical University of Varna

Re: Statement about a competitive procedure for holding of the academic position „Associate Professor”– Field of Higher education 7. „Health care and Sport“, professional direction 7.4. „Public Health“ and scientific specialty „Public Health Management“ in the Department of „Social Medicine and Healthcare Organisation”- Faculty of Public Health, MU-Varna, announced in State Gazette №53/12.06.2020.

The applicant is one: **Dr. Silviya Pavlova Nikolova**. The candidate has submitted all the necessary documents for the competition, which are in accordance with the requirements of the Law for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation, and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical University of Varna.

I. Career profile analysis of the candidate.

Dr. Silviya Pavlova Nikolova was born on January 5th, 1983 in the town of Stara Zagora. Consecutively, she acquired the qualification degrees "Bachelor" (2001/2005) and "Master" (2005/2006) in "Healthcare Management" at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna. In 2013 the candidate defended her dissertation at the Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon / University of Texas at Arlington, USA, and became a PhD of the specialty: "Social policy and social activities", qualification: "social work", additional qualification: "special pedagogy" (children with low vision and blindness). The dissertation is on "Geography of Disability. An Analysis Based on the Socioeconomic Levels of Two Metropolitan Areas Dallas, Texas and Monterrey Nuevo Leon". In the beginning of the year 2020 Dr Nikolova has acquired a specialty in "Medical Informatics and Health Management". She has passed numerous qualifications in the field of public health, disability epidemiology, etc. Since 2014 she has been an assistant at the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization, and at the same time she is an associate at the university electronic platform Blackboard. Since 2016 Silviya Nikolova, after a competition, became a senior assistant at the same department.

She is a member of the following scientific organizations: European Public Health Organisation (EUPHA), The Bulgarian Association of Public Health, Council on Social Work Education [CSWE] etc. The candidate is fluent in spoken and written English and Spanish.

II. General description of the submitted materials for the competition.

The candidate has submitted all the necessary documents according to the requirements for the occupation of the academic position "Associate Professor" in the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical University of Varna. This statement was prepared on the basis of the materials submitted by the candidate, submitted at Medical University of Varna until the deadline for the competition.

III. Assessment of the candidate's scientific papers and the overall academic development.

Dr. Silvia Pavlova Nikolova participates in this competition with 22 titles; 15 of the publications are in international journals, in English and in Spanish.

The quantitative and qualitative scientometric characteristics related to the presented research and publication activity are as follows:

- Monograph - 1 - independently developed: "Metaaspects of Disabilities - Part 1" (2020; 253 pages; 4 chapters, 7 appendices, each ending with a bibliographic references)
- Total publications (full-text in magazines, collections) - 21;
- 8 of the publications are indexed in SCOPUS and Web of Science;
- The total IF of the publications is 15,688; A reference to the impact factor (IF) of the publications is attached.
- 13 of the publications are in unrefereed journals with scientific review or in edited collective volumes.
- From the attached reference-self-assessment for fulfillment of the national minimum scientometric requirements it can be concluded that the number of points by groups of indicators exceeds the scientometric requirements.
- The report for participation in scientific and educational projects consists of 1 international project.
- Dr. Silvia P. Nikolova was a reviewer and editor (2018-2019) of the journal Scripta Scientifica Salutis Publicae, as well as a reviewer of the African Journal of AIDS Research and Social Indicators Research.
- Dr. Silvia P. Nikolova actively participates in national and international scientific events, thus making her research available to the national and international scientific community.
- In 2014 received the Council on Disability and Persons with Disabilities Manuscript Award - CSWE for the article "Geo-social and health disparities among persons with disabilities living in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon and Dallas, Texas". In 2019 again from CSWE for the publication "The Disability Rights Movement and the Struggle for Social Change: Parents Fighting for the Survival of Their Children in Bulgaria".

Among the scientific achievements of Dr. S. Nikolova is the fact that she was a research scholar of the Fulbright Foundation at the University of Chicago, Illinois (UIC) (September 2018 - January 2019). A fact that contributes greatly to building the scientific authority of the candidate.

IV. Monograph assessment, presented as a habilitation work for the competition.

In the monograph "Meta-analysis of disabilities - part 1" Dr SP Nikolova is the only author, with scientific reviewers Prof. Dr. A. Kerekovska and Assoc. Prof. Dr. K. Dokova. The monograph is an in-depth and well-structured presentation of the different approaches in the field of disability. The monograph consists of 4 chapters, each ending with references from the different fields of science such as public health, sociology, anthropology, history and social policy. The book is illustrated with pictures, tables and figures, synthesizing the various main themes in the monograph. The global trends and the Bulgarian cultural and social specific characteristics are combined in an interesting way. A historical review and terminological clarification necessary for each scientific development has been made. The modern standards adopted through the classifications of disabilities according to the WHO from 1980 are also discussed (International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap-ICIDH and since 2001 (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health - ICF) The various methodological aspects in the disabilities studies are presented, as well as standardized tools for their assessment. The monograph also contains 7 appendices, which are a natural addition to the main text and specifically present questionnaires and various aspects of the facts presented in the four chapters.

The monographic topic is relevant and interesting and is presented competently and comprehensively. The author shares her rich research and personal experience related to the people with disabilities. Despite the heavy and dark monographic topic, the paper ends with the belief and hope that future positive decisions in favor of people with disabilities are coming.

V. Reflection (citation) of the applicant's publications in the national and foreign literature (publication image).

The presented citations meet and exceed the minimum requirements for the position of "associate professor", which is evident also from the research profiles of Dr. Nikolova in ResearchGate and Google Scholar.

VI. Complex, qualitative assessment of mentoring and teaching activities, incl. scientific guidance of students, PhD students, postgraduate students.

Dr. Silvia Pavlova Nikolova has a serious teaching experience. She teaches the following disciplines: social medicine, biostatistics, medical and social aspects of disabilities.

The candidate has a high academic workload, leading both exercises and lectures. Dr. Nikolova has been a research supervisor of students in the Master's programs in "health management" and "public health", as well as a scientific consultant to PhD students.

VII. Recommendations.

I recommend Dr. Nikolova to continue her research work with the same energy as she has had so far. I recommend her to do the next parts of her monograph.

VIII. Personal reflexions.

My personal impressions of Dr. Silvia Pavlova Nikolova date back to September 2015. We have worked together as teachers and researchers in the field of health promotion. Memorable for the university life was the charity event, organized by her in 2016, in favor of 77 disabled boys and girls at the aged 18 to 25 years from "Anastasia Dr. Zhelezkova" - Varna. Dr. Silvia P. Nikolova defines herself as a social researcher. My impressions are that as a scientist she combines research curiosity and competence, working tirelessly to put people with disabilities in the public and research focus. Sylvia is an intelligent, purposeful and socially active professional. In working with colleagues maintains an ethical style of communication. She is open to every colleague who approach her for support related to her statistical analysis expertise. I wish Silvia P. Nikolova to continue her development "Freely, widely and fully!" (I use the Elin Pelin's words, quoted by the candidate in the monograph).

IX. Conclusion and overall assessment of the applicant's compliance with the mandatory conditions and mandatory quantitative criteria and scientometric indicators according to the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical University of Varna for the position "associate professor".

From the submitted materials, it follows that the applicant fully meets the mandatory quantitative and qualitative criteria according to the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical University of Varna for the position "associate professor".

The main scientific contributions of the candidate are related to inequalities in people with disabilities. There is a special focus on gender inequalities and HIV risk in sub-Saharan Africa. In this field she has accumulated research expertise, which gives grounds to claim that Dr. Silviya P. Nikolova is a scientist

with international experience. The statistical analysis skills and competencies possessed by the candidate in combination with the research and teaching skills are an additional advantage in support of the application for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Department of Social Medicine and Health Care Organization.

The overall assessment of the research and career profile of the candidate, her teaching activity, scientific performances and contributions of the candidate support the **positive statement** and the proposal to the distinguished members of the Scientific Jury to choose Dr. Silvia P. Nikolova for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the professional field 7.4. Public Health, in the field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, scientific specialty "Public Health Management", for the needs of the Department of Social Medicine and Healthcare Organization, in a competition announced in the State Gazette, issue 53 of 12.06.2020.

01.10.2020

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Desislava Vankova



Varna