

TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF SCIENTIFIC JURY
ASSOC. PROF. BOYAN KULOV, PhD
AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF GEOPHYSICS, GEODESY AND
GEOGRAPHY (NIGGG) OF THE BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (BAS)

A REVIEW

by Prof. Nikolina R. Popova - Dimitrova, PhD –

a member of the jury in a competition for occupying the academic position "associate professor" under professional strand 4.4. „Earth Sciences”, scientific specialty "Economic and Social Geography" (Geography of Tourism) for the needs of the Geography Department, which competition is promulgated in State Gazette, No. 104 of 14.12.2018 with candidate Assoc. Prof.

Dessislava Georgieva Varadzhakova, PhD .

The present review has been drawn in accordance with the requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and the Regulations for its Application (RAADASRB). It consists of three sections and a conclusion which include the requirements to the candidate and to her educational and scientific-research activities

Requirements to the candidate

(Article 29 (1), (2) of ADASRB and Article 60 (1) of RAADASRB)

The participant in the competition was born on 27.04.1980 in the city of Sofia. In 2002, she graduated from the University of National and World Economy and she obtained ACS "bachelor" in Tourism and in 2004 she obtained ACS “master” in Tourism. In 2010 Desislava Varadzhakova was awarded the educational-scientific degree "doctor" under the code 05.02.18 - Economics and Management (Tourism), by the University of National and World Economy, and in 2016 she was

awarded the academic title "associate professor" under the professional strand 3.9 Tourism by the "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo.

The employment of Assoc. Prof. Varadzhakova, PhD was implemented entirely in the field of tourism. Therefore she has gained considerable practical experience. From 2003 to 2015 she had been working in travel operating and agent companies as a travel agent, as well as a marketing and sales manager and executive director, which fact objectively determines the practical orientation of her lecture's activity. Her lecture's activity began in 2010 as a fee-based lecturer at the University of Forestry – Sofia. From the same year until 2016, she had been working consecutively as a lecturer and assistant professor at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski " and since 2016 till now she has been an associate professor at the "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo.

Assoc. Prof. Varadzhakova, PhD has **specialized** in: Université de Savoie, Annecy, France. She has completed successfully certified IATA/UFTAA Travel agents training courses in Geography, as well as AMADEUS for airline tickets sale. She has participated in an European project "Sustour - training and assessment of sustainability in the tourism sector" and she is an expert in the National expert group on sustainable tourism.

Requirements to the academic activity

(Article 29 (4) and Article 29 “b” (2), point 2 of ADASRB and Article 61 (2) point 1 of RAADASRB)

The candidate **lectures** in Bachelor and Master's programs at the "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo in the following subject disciplines: Urban and Rural Tourism, Modern Tourism Types, Hotels and restaurants tourism , Travel operating and tourist agent activities, International Tourism Exchanges, International Tourism Business, Quality and Certification in Tourism. She has a printed textbook (№ 5) and monographs (№2 and 3), in subjects which are essential for her lecturer' activities.

The candidate has a thorough knowledge of written and spoken Spanish, English, Russian and French languages, which further enhances her lecturer's activity.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. D. Varadzhakova, PhD carries out active administrative activities, such as preparation of accreditation documentation, organizing an annual conference on Tourism etc.

Requirements to her scientific-research activity

(Article 29 (1), point.3, point.4, article 29 «b» (2), point 2 of ADASRB и article 60 (1) point 3 и point 4; article 61 (2) point 2 of RAADASRB)

In connection with her participation in the competition, the candidate has presented 43 publications with total volume of 926 pages, including: 4 monographs, one of them in co-authorship, 1 textbook, 9 articles, 24 papers and 5 articles published in professional journals. Some of them (No. 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43) are not considered for reviewing because of their stressed pragmatic nature and absence of basic attributes of the scientific research. 38 works with a total volume of 917 pages are considered for reviewing and they are shown in Table 1, after reducing of the publications pointed above.

Table 1

Type and volume of the publications, with the reduction, after defense of dissertation thesis for awarding a Doctor degree

No	Type of publications	Number	Numbering in the list of publications	Number of pages
1	Monographs, parts of monographs and publications equivalent to monographic work	4	№№ 1, 2, 3 и 4	531
3	Articles	9	№№ 6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13, 14,	45
4	Reports	24	№№ 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 и 38	191
5	Textbooks	1	№ 5	146
	Total	38		917

The publications approved for assessment were **reviewed by habilitated lecturers** of the "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo, the University of National and World Economy and other universities in the country. Most of these publications have been **printed** in indexed issues in the country and abroad (No 7). Some of them are available online. Most of them are promoted through book distribution and library book exchange.

With exception of publications No. 18 and 20, all other papers have been developed by the candidate on her own, one chapter in the collective monograph included (No 4). From the

quotation reference of the candidate below it is clear that the total number of quotes is 29 and the number of the quoted works is 21.

Thematically, the candidate's science work she participates in the competition with, is comparatively varied. Publications prevail there relating to the management of operations, both in the production sectors of tourism industry- hotels and restaurants tourism, aviation, golf and on destination level too. Subject of research interest are: 1) Issues of Revenue management and Yield management, which are examined in 13 publications, one of which represents a monographic work (№ 2), followed by works on tourism types - 7 publications, one of them represents a monographic work (№ 3) and another one is a textbook (№ 4); 2) Issues related to tourism management, on territorial level included - 5 publications; and 3) Wide range of issues concerning digitalisation in tourism, marketing in tourism, etc. The thematic framework of the candidate's publications is in line with the competition announced. The analysis of these publications gives us the grounds to group them in the following thematic spheres on the basis of two criteria: a) quantitative criterion (number of publications) and b) qualitative criterion (scientific weight / type of publications).

1. Economic aspects, revenue and yield management in tourism

2. Types of tourism

3. Management of tourism, management of a tourist destination included

4. Tourism potential

5. Tourism demand;

6. Digitalization and marketing in tourism

The first thematic strand is represented by the highest number of works (No. 2, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 36, 37 and 38). They examine a relatively new topic about the Bulgarian practice in tourism, which topic is not sufficiently researched but it is practically significant - the topic for revenue and yield management. The author successfully examines the special features of implementing strategies and tactics for maximizing of revenues in the key production sectors of tourism - aviation, hotels and restaurants tourism and golf industry. The monographic work "Revenue Management in Tourism" includes the results of the examined issues of the revenue management in works 24, 25, 26, 30, 31 and 33. It should be noted that in the monograph and the above mentioned works, the reproductive approach predominates. The author has not approbated the governance practice of the revenue management in Bulgarian tourist enterprises in order to

identify the specifics of its application in Bulgaria and thus to significantly increase the contributory character of the works in the thematic strand in question.

The second thematic strand according to the number of the publications (No. 3, 4, 7, 15, 18, 23) and their character is related to the types of tourism. One of the three monographs, namely "Organization of Urban Tourism" and the textbook "Cultural - Historical Tourism" fall within this thematic sphere. It should be immediately noted that the author's interest is directed to the most topical types of tourism in the modern world, namely the cultural - historical and urban tourism. The monographic work "Organization of Urban Tourism" examines theoretical and methodological issues of the organization of tourism in the towns and cities with a view to increase their competitiveness as tourist destinations.

As a recommendation, we will highlight the need for more explicit analysis, towards a comparative analysis of existing theoretical perspectives, as well as the use of more prime sources, especially in cases of a literary review. In the present book, the author proposes a methodology for improving the organization of urban tourism, which should include specific stages related to this type of tourism. But there is not a ground of the authorship - what the proposed methodology differs from the existing practices with. The methods for researching the demand, supply, for analyzing of the tourist product, price, advertising, etc. are not own author's methods. The methods pointed are universal and they are applied not only in the sphere of urban tourism. Some omissions can be noted in the reference, for example, the authorship of the SERVQUAL method, p. 103. A positive aspect of this work is that it can be used as a guide for development and organization of an urban tourist product. The textbook "Cultural - Historical Tourism" examines important issues related to the cultural values and their role in the development of cultural tourism. A significant part of the content is descriptive, presenting the main types of cultural - historical sites in Bulgaria. There is no critical analysis based on evaluation of the sites in question in terms of problems related to their tourist use. These omissions are typical for the works included in the second thematic strand.

The next strand of the examined ones concerns issues related to management of tourism and management of tourist destinations (No. 10, 11, 16, 17 and 29). The author demonstrates originality of her approach to the management of tourist destinations as interpreting it through applying the Theory of constraints (No.10) and justifies the weight of criterion for accessibility to the tourist destinations when examining the constraints. However, there are no researches of the

candidate proving or rejecting his thesis. Purely theoretical consideration of the issues of sustainable management of the tourist destinations is characteristic also for the rest of publications falling within this thematic sphere.

The fourth thematic strand refers to tourism potential. It is represented by one monograph and one paper work (No. 1 and 35). The monograph "Burrell: tourist resources" is distinguished by pronounced historical and geographic character. The descriptive approach predominates. Neglect of prime sources can be noticed, especially when it comes to a fundamental concept - terminological apparatus, such as the definition and specifics of the term 'tourism resources'. The essential second chapter presents the natural and anthropogenic objects and phenomena in the area of Burrell without applying of tourist value approach. Therefore the text limits within its purely geographic content and its character remains close to a reference book rather than to a monographic work. The contributory nature is less pronounced. These notes are valid also for work 35, namely the paper-work "Via Diagonalis as resource for the development of cultural tourism in Bulgaria and Serbia".

The fifth thematic strand includes two works (No. 9 and 21) related to examination of different aspects of the tourism demand. Work No. 9 enriches the geography of tourism in Bulgaria revealing a full picture of inbound tourism from the neighboring Balkan countries in terms of volume and structure of their distribution over time. The conclusions have particular practical effect. The second work which examines the security issues of individual and group tourists has predominantly reproductive character, with no significant scientific contribution.

The sixth thematic strand includes two paper-works on digitalization in tourism, systematizing the spheres of application of the new technologies in tourism and their advantages, as well as a paper-work in the sphere of marketing in tourism systemizing very well the types of internet marketing, remarketing, the ways of interaction with the client in case of remarketing and remarketing methods. The reproductive character of these works is typical again.

The list of works is supplemented by one paper-work on the competitiveness of the tourist enterprise (32) and one paper-work presenting a good practice (34). Work 32 examines important theoretical issues related to innovations in tourism and, in particular, the main innovation patterns in tourism. Work 34 compares good practices in the sphere of responsible tourism in Costa Rica

and Bulgaria. The author does not reach a high level of comparative analysis according to specific comparable criteria.

The scientific work of the candidate in the competition for "associate professor" is distinguished by a certain orientation towards topical aspects related to development of tourism, as well as to topics with relatively low level of study and significant practical effect. It has a special focus, concreteness and practical orientation of the issues addressed, related to the aforementioned problems. It contains the following **comparative advantages**:

1) Thematic diversity, covering all the main components of the production structure of tourism and giving a real and complete picture of the development of scientific knowledge in the pointed spheres of tourism;

2) Study of key economic aspects, including new and poorly studied in Bulgaria ones, such as revenue and yield management, which way they can be distinguished by their marked practical significance;

3) Application of regional approach to studying the problem issues related to development of tourism, which approach gives practical value to candidate's works;

4) The dominant part of the studies is self-dependant, which makes the contribution a personal achievement of the candidate for "associate professor" and proves the potential for sustainability of the quality accumulation in the research activities of Assoc. Prof. Varadzhakova, PhD.

The contributions are personal achievement of the candidate for "associate professor". The bibliographical apparatus is used correctly. No inadmissible borrowings from other authors have been established.

Recommendations:

The outstanding qualities of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dessislava Varadzhakova objectively testify to the willingness to move at a higher level of research in the direction of: 1 / implementation of an empirical approach, linked to field studies, to provide a factual contribution in the development of the theory of tourism in Bulgaria; 2 / development of author textbooks and monographs, as well as of research papers with a strong research character - studies that would contribute to maintaining the high quality of university tourism education.

Quotes

A total of 21 cited quotes are out of the total of 29 citations - the reviewer finds that all 29 quotes are from authors that are not relevant - they are not co-authors in the presented works. Out of all quotes, 15 are **in monographs and collective volumes with scientific reviews**, and 14 in non-referenced journals with scientific reviews. The number of quotes refers to the value of the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Desislava Varadzhakova

Conclusion

From the check made on the submitted materials for the contest, **there were no violations of the procedure**. The requirements of Art. 29 "b" (2) p. 1 и p. 2 of ADASRB и article 60 (1); article 61 (1) and point 1 and point 2 of RAADASRB are followed.

Based on the knowledge of the competition documents and the evaluation of the submitted publications, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. He is the **only candidate** in the competition;
2. Acquired the educational and scientific degree "doctor";
3. Occupies the academic position "**Assoc. Prof.**" at University of Veliko Tarnovo
4. The minimum requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor", as defined in the Regulations for the conditions and order for acquiring academic degrees and for occupying academic positions in Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, respectively the requirements of Art. 2b, para. 5 of the SRADB, according to the Presentation of Desislava Georgieva Varadzhakova (Penkova), and the correspondence established by the reviewer with a total of 443 points at a required number of 430 points.
5. Reads full lectures on seven study courses in PN 3.9 Tourism.
6. Manages graduates (16) from the Master's Degree Program;
7. Presented and accepted for evaluation, is sufficient in volume, unrelated to the doctor's thesis, scientific production;
8. 29 citations of the candidate from other authors have been documented;

In its entirety, the publications submitted for review by the applicant, contain **scientifically applied contributions**, which further develop the theoretical knowledge to solve essential problems in the sustainable development of tourism.

My common assessment of the criteria and indicators for the teaching and research activities shows that Assoc. Prof. Dessislava Varadzhakova meets the requirements of Art.29 and Art. 29 “b” (2) of ADASRB and article 60 and 61 of RAADASRB for occupying the academic position "**associate professor**" on field 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics, professional direction 4.4. Earth sciences.

Sofia,
15.04.2019

Reviewer:
(Prof. PhD Nikolina Popova)