

STATEMENT

by

Prof. Dr. Marin Rahnev Roussev – Member of the Scientific Jury for the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Professional field 4.4. Earth Sciences, Scientific specialty "Economic and Social Geography"

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROCEDURE AND THE CANDIDATE

The competition was announced in the State Gazette, issue 86 from 15.10.2021.

The Scientific Jury was constituted by an Order 01-265 / 12.11.2021 of the Director of the National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography.

The first meeting of the Scientific Jury was held on December the 17th, 2021 on which a Chairman was elected and those who will prepare reviews and statements were designated.

There are no legal violations under the competition procedure. All papers and documents required for reviewing have been provided.

The only candidate for the competition is Chief Assistant Professor Alexandra Lyubenova Ravnachka, PhD. The same meets the terms of Article 24 (1) set out in the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, of Article 53 (1) of the Regulations for its implementation, as well as of Article 1a and Article 54 of the respective Regulations of NIGGG (National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography).

Chief Assistant Professor Al. Ravnachka, PhD was born in 1977. During the period 1996-2001 she was a student at the Faculty of Geology and Geography at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" where she graduated with a master's degree in Geography with a teaching qualification. In 2003 she has been appointed as a research fellow at the Geographical Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

During the period 2010-2017 she occupied the position of "Assistant Professor" at the newly formed National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography (Department "Geography", Division "Economic and Social Geography"). In 2017 she defended a doctoral dissertation on the topic *"Supply and Demand of Labour Power in Blagoevgrad District (2001-2011)"*. On this ground during the same year she was appointed to the position of "Chief Assistant Professor".

RESEARCH ACTIVITY AND SCIENTIFIC CREATIVE WORK OF THE CANDIDATE

Alexandra Ravnachka is an author and a co-author of nearly 30 scientific publications most of which are in the field of Demography, Application of the Geographic Information Systems and Physical Geography. Particular for the competition she presents 1 author's monograph (independent), 2 chapters from joint monographs (co-authorship) and 19 studies and articles withal the half of them are published in English and 5 are issued in foreign scientific editions. The reference presented by the candidate and the verification made show that her scientific creative work covers the minimum requirements needed for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in terms of publications, and also of citations and projects as well.

With the present statement I will focus on Ravnachka's researches published after the defense of her doctoral dissertation in 2017 and after the occupation of the academic position of "Chief Assistant Professor". For the specified 5-year period these are: 1 author's monograph (independent), 2 chapters from joint monographs (co-authorship), 1 author's study (independent) and 4 joint studies (co-authorship), 1 author's article (independent) and 2 joint articles (co-authorship). Among them only the monograph and one of the articles are not in English. None of the above-indicated 11 publications does not directly repeat the subject matter of the candidate's dissertation from 2017, most of them have an original upgrading character. Conditionally their overall amount is equivalent to about 350 standard pages which is more than enough for the competition's aim (*when summing up with approximation both the comparative volume of the submitted texts and also the relative participation's share in the joint publications of the candidate have been taken into account*).

With the greatest scientific research value stands out the author's monograph (independent) "*The Demographic Situation and the Labour Market in the Districts of Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil*" with a volume of about 240 standard pages. I consider this work as a pivotal one for the habilitation of Chief Assistant Professor Ravnachka.

Apart, the candidate declares participation for the last 5 years in altogether 11 scientific projects, including 4 international, which is a very good attest for research activity.

The habilitation work is dedicated to extremely important aspects for the development of two Bulgarian administrative districts. Through this work the candidate demonstrates at a very good level both her skills to handle traditional research approaches and also to analyze objectively the state of the processes within the research object connected to her working hypothesis. Furthermore, it should be noticed especially the extremely topical research subject from the point of view of its high level of practical applicability and contribution potential.

The book is richly illustrated in terms of tables and diagrams. The style is at the required scientific level, the authors used are cited correctly, the derived main accents and conclusions are objectively presented. However, the cartographic method has been overmuch ignored.

The other publications have relatively less weight for the procedure but a lot of them have an original character and high scientific value. In this regard I would like to pay special attention to the publication with the numbering G8.12 (Г8.12) where Ch. Assist. Prof. Ravnachka makes an impressive non-traditional attempt to persuade us of mutual connections between Geomorphology and Geodemography.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND CRITICAL NOTES

I consider the contributions I_2 , I_3 , II_2 , II_3 and III_1 declared in the reference as crucial though they can be defined in a shorter and clearer form, and I opine that it is possible to find a common wording by conjunction of I_2 and II_2 .

In my opinion, in the presented main monographic work there is an excessive placement of accents which are typical for demographic research refracted through the research prism of the so-called "Labour Economy". This is to some extent at the cost of the decades-proven spatial approaches in the Geography, in the theory and the practice of the Geography of Population and Settlements / the Geodemography. Withal a large

part of the terminology used and the related basic information is strongly subordinated to the methodological framework and the statistical sections imposed as a priority within the National Statistical Institute.

In my opinion, the task of the Geographer is not only to use (download) ready-gathered statistical information and to subordinate it to the research thesis. Much higher value it gains when it is transformed in a qualitative term through indexes and coefficients for the purposes of comparative spatial analysis and synthesis. Thus, the well defined in the book territorial differences can be effectively transformed into territorial balances and there will be no necessity for tables with an overly in detail written out absolute numerical information.

As a kind of retreat from the Geography I consider also the almost complete lack of maps, cartograms, map diagrams. In the monograph they are only 5 altogether and because of their inappropriate format and methods applied are practically unsuitable for use.

I allow myself to pay special attention to these aspects because, in my opinion, in the last years this gradually begins to take shape as a negative trend, especially among younger researchers who are nomenclaturally belonging to or declaring attachment to the geographical scientific research.

I accept the book body format chosen by the author, the way of paging, and to some extent also the font selection, as inappropriate. Thus, to a large extent, the good scientific research characteristics become nearly invisible for the scientific audience. Besides the maps in this way "hidden" remain even some of the diagrams (*figs. 9, 36, 42 etc.*). By some of them, apart from the inappropriate format, also a significant additional compression can be observed whereby just 70-80 % of their envisaged place is filled out. Here I want to emphasize that the sense of the book is not to be available (only to exist), but to succeed in an accessible way to convey scientific messages.

I believe that the monographic work could only have won if the author had based part of her scientific views also on Geographers like Zahariev, Beshkov, Borisov, Hristov, Ganev, Traykov, that have valuable elaborations subjectively and/or objectively overlapping with her working hypothesis. Some of their researches can

serve as a good bedrock for these monograph's parts where the long-term tendencies in the socio-economic development of the studied territories can be traced.

CONCLUSION

The observed procedural conditions of the competition, scientometric data about the candidate and the indisputable contributions of her creative work give ground and reason to propose to the Honorable Members of the Scientific Jury to vote for this that Chief Assistant Professor Alexandra Lyubenova Ravnachka, PhD occupies the academic position of "Associate Professor" for which I will also vote in favor.

Sofia, 28.01.2022

This statement has been prepared by

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