OPINION

by Associate Professor Ralitsa Simeonova-Ganeva, PhD

FEBA, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridksi

Subject: Competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the Professional Field 4.4. Earth Sciences, Scientific Specialty "Economic and Social Geography" in the Department of Geography, which was announced in the State Gazette Issue 86/ 15.10.2021, in accordance with Article 55 paragraph 4 of the *Rules for Implementation of the Act for Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria* (ADASRB) at the National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography (NIGGG) – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS)

with the single candidate Dr. Alexandra Lyubenova Ravnachka

This opinion is prepared based on the Order No. 01-265/ 12.11.2021 of the Director of NIGGG – BAS and the resolution of the first meeting of the scientific jury with Minutes No. 1/ 17.12.2021. The opinion is in accordance with the requirements set in the ADASRB, the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at BAS*, and the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

I. Candidate's background

The only candidate in the competition, Dr. Alexandra Ravnacka, has many years of research experience in the field of economic and social geography. She holds a master's degree in *Geography* from the Faculty of Geology and Geography at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. In 2017, she received a Doctorate in *Economic and Social Geography* at NIGGG – BAS. Her professional path began in 2003 as a research associate at the National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography. She has participated in over 20 national and international scientific and applied research projects, among which the following can be mentioned: *Comparative*

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Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe. Acronym: COMPASS Project funded under the ESPON programme (2016-2018), *Implementing Nature Based Solutions for Creating a Resourceful Circular City. COST CA 17133Circular City Re. So.* (2018-2022), *Mapping and Assessment for Integrated Ecosystem Accounting. EC* – Horizon *2020 Call SC5-18a-2018.* (2019), etc.

II. Information on the compliance with the national scientometric requirements

The candidate in the competition has submitted detailed reports, from which a compliance with the minimum national requirements for scientific and teaching activities for the academic position of "Associate Professor" can be established. Based on the information provided, the following summaries can be made for the individual groups of indicators:

Group A: Dissertation for acquiring educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

The candidate has successfully defended a dissertation on the following topic: *"Supply and Demand of Workforce in Blagoevgrad Region (2001-2011)"*, which corresponds to **50 points** according to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG,* and meets the minimum requirements.

Group C: Habilitation work – monograph or scientific publications

The candidate has published a monograph: *Ravnachka, Al. Demographic Situation and Labour Market in Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil districts.* National Publishing House for Education and Science Az-buki at the Ministry of Education, Sofia, 2021, 216 s. ISBN 978-619-7065-80-0, which corresponds to **100 points** according to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG,* and meets the minimum requirements.

Group D: Other scientific publications

Other scientific publications submitted for participation in the competition include the following:

— Under item 7, Scientific publications which are referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information: two publications in co-authorship are presented, which corresponds to **18 points** according to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

— Under item 8, Scientific publications which are not referenced but are peer-reviewed and edited: 17 publications, both independent and co-authored, are presented, which corresponds to **218 points** according to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

— Under item 9, Published book chapter: two such publications are presented, which are co-authored, and correspond to **6 points** according to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

In total, the candidate's score for group D is **242 points**, which is above the required minimum of 220 points, established in the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

Group E: Citations or reviews in scientific publications

The following citations are submitted for participation in the competition:

— Under item 10, Citations or reviews in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases (Scopus, Web of Science, ERIH+) with scientific content or in monographs, books, or collective volumes: 5 citations are presented, which corresponds to **25 points** according to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

— Under item 11, Citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review: 4 citations are presented, which corresponds to **12 points** according to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

— Under item 12, Citations or reviews in unreferenced journals with scientific review: 17 citations are presented, which corresponds to **34 points** according to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

In total, the candidate's score for group E is **71 points**, which is above the required minimum of 60 points, established in the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

Group E: Participation in national and international scientific projects

For the competition, the candidate has submitted information about participation in two national and one international project, with a total of **40 points** for the indicators of Group E, which is above the required minimum of 30 points established in the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*.

According to the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG*, the candidates' criteria for the academic position "Associate Professor" determine a minimum of 460 points. The information and documents provided by Dr. Alexandra Ravnachka for participation in this competition show that these minimum requirements are fully met. The total score reported based on the above information exceeds that minimum and amounts to **503 points**.

III. Scientific contributions

The candidate has submitted a thorough reference for the scientific contributions they participate with in this competition. The number of these scientific contributions is seven, and they are grouped as follows:

— *Economic geography and demographic research*: the formulated contributions in this direction are three. First, it is indicated that a parameterization of the socio-economic and demographic development of the rural areas in Bulgaria, as well as of the municipalities in the mountain territories of the country. That includes an assessment of the intensity of the process of depopulation and classification of municipalities in mountain areas. Second, identification and complex analysis of the features, limitations and challenges to the socio-economic development of two specific regions (Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil) are elaborated, which can be applied to the development of regional

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assessments, forecasts and policies. Another significant contribution in this category is the identification of the specific characteristics of school segregation and labor integration of the Roma population (in Harman Mahala, Plovdiv). This includes adaptation and testing of a methodology for estimating five dimensions of geospatial segregation, according to the conceptual scheme of Massey and Denton.

— *Geographical features of the labour market*: the formulated contributions in this direction are three. The first formulated contribution in this group refers to the comparative analysis of the regional labor markets in the South Central and Southwest Planning Region, which includes an assessment of the impact of the accession of the new Member States to the EU (including Bulgaria) on the functioning of the labor market in these areas. Next is the candidate's contribution related to the typology of the administrative-territorial units at LAU 1 level in Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil regions, according to the demographic situation and the state of the labor market. The study also includes the measurement of spatial dynamics in economic activity, employment, and unemployment in these labor markets. An important aspect here is the analysis of recent regional active labor market policies and the assessment of the needs for specific measures and approaches in accordance with the local socio-economic characteristics. Another contribution formulated by the candidate refers to the identification and analysis of regional features of the state and the development of the labor market in Blagoevgrad region during the country's various periods of socio-economic transformation.

— *Applications of the concept of ecosystem services:* The formulated contribution here refers to the testing of a model for the evaluation of ecosystem services through GIS-based mapping in a specific mountain municipality (in Bulgaria) since it is one of the first implementations of such a model at the local level in the country and has its place in the development of applied research in that direction.

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I accept the contributions thus formulated and share the view that they are predominantly related to the empirical analysis of difficult-to-access or incomplete regional data. The contributions themselves are practical and of great value for all areas of social sciences, public administration, and business.

IV.   Conclusion

For the current competition, the candidate, Dr. Alexandra Ravnakova, has presented a sufficient number of interesting and significant scientific publications which demonstrate professionalism and compliance with the established international and Bulgarian research standards. The candidate is a recognizable researcher in their field. The results of their research activities expand the existing knowledge in economic and social geography and can be used for the elaboration of strategies and policies for demographic and socio-economic development at regional level. The assessment of the candidate's scientometric indicators shows that they fully meet the minimum national requirements, as well as the ones set in the *Rules for Implementation of the ADASRB at NIGGG* for the position of "Associate Professor".

Based on the above reasoning and on the established compliance of the application with the requirements of the *ADASRB* and the relevant rules for its implementation, I vote in favor of choosing the candidate, Dr. Alexandra Ravnachka, to hold the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Department of Geography in Professional Field 4.4. Earth Sciences, Scientific Specialty "Economic and Social Geography", announced for the needs of the National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

28.01.2022   *Signed:*

Sofia   *Ralitsa Simeonova-Ganeva*

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