

## **OPINION**

by

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on

scientific production presented to the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 9.1. „National Security“, as per SG 28 of April 02, 2024 publication,

with a candidate

Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Vassileva Sidova

### **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University**

Based on the submitted documents, more specifically the reference for the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), it is clear that the scientific production presented by the candidate for this competition meets both the requirements of the ZRASRB and the requirements of the Ordinance on the Development of the Academic Staff of the NBU. It is worth noting that the applicant not merely met the minimum requirements in terms of indicators, but also exceeded them (e.g. indicators group D and Z) in some cases significantly (e.g. indicator group D, Z and I).

Regarding the candidate, I am not aware of any proven plagiarism in the scientific papers submitted for the competition.

### **II. Research activity and results**

#### **1. The monograph**

The candidate participated in the competition with the monograph "Human security through European territorial cooperation: benefits, challenges, perspectives (following the example of the Republic of Bulgaria)." The monograph has been published. The bibliography includes 245 sources (60 in Bulgarian and 185 in English). The results from the check of the monograph with the StrikePlagiarism.com plagiarism prevention software demonstrated 3.77% similarity on CS1 and 0.77% similarity on CS2. The paper is balanced, with a clear structure and idea, each chapter is followed by conclusions that summarize the results of the discussion in the relevant part. The monograph consists of an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. In my opinion, it is worth highlighting the comprehensive structure of the narrative, which is not always a distinctive feature of scientific production in our country.

As far as I know, this is the first in-depth study of human security as a subject of research in the Bulgarian scientific literature, and not only in terms of an object of research. This in itself is an indication of the contributive nature of the monograph.

In the first chapter, entitled "Human security - content and development", the author outlines the essence and main characteristics of the concept of human security, tracing the main stages in the development of the concept. The study highlights the importance of the UN for the emergence of the concept and understanding of human security (p. 13 *et seq.*).

The second chapter, entitled "Methodology for analyzing the provision of human security through European territorial cooperation" is of key importance for the work. Through a combination of the constructivist method (p. 58 *et seq.*) and the criterion of functionality of the European Territorial Cooperation (p. 62 *et seq.*), the candidate outlines the path of her research. Thus, on the one hand, freedom from fear, freedom from scarcity and freedom for a dignified life are "intersected" with cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. The result is nine intersections that the author outlines. Having singled out three main ones for her analysis, the candidate takes them as the basis of the study in the next three chapters of the monograph. In my opinion, this chapter contributes the most to the originality of the study and its significance.

Chapter three, "Freedom from fear through cross-border cooperation", analyzes the aspects of freedom from fear through political, personal and health security as its aspects. Applying the empirical method as the basis of the analysis in this chapter, the author examines a number of cross-border programs with the participation of Bulgaria and draws conclusions about the trends in cross-border cooperation with the participation of Bulgaria, being critical of its practical prospects for a positive impact on freedom from fear ( pp. 173-174).

Chapter four, "Freedom from Scarcity through Transnational Cooperation", takes an analogous approach to that of Chapter three, analyzing aspects of freedom from scarcity through economic and food security. Here too, an empirical analysis of transnational programs with the participation of Bulgaria is used - Transnational Program "Danube" (p. 179), Transnational Program "Balkans-Mediterranean Sea" (p. 183) and Transnational Program Interreg VI-B NEXT "Black Sea Basin" (p. 205) - as the analysis substantiates the conclusion of a sustained positive trend.

The final chapter, "Freedom for a dignified life through international cooperation", focuses on the dimensions of freedom for a dignified life, environmental and community security, by analyzing the benefits of six interregional EU programs. It is concluded that there is an unrealized potential for securing freedom for a dignified life.

## 2. Other publications presented for the competition

The candidate also participates in the competition with 1 study published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes or in specialized publications for classified information, 1 chapter of a collective monograph and 19 articles and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes or in specialized

publications for classified information. Of the mentioned 19 articles and reports, 10 were published independently, and 9 were co-authored. The candidate has also published a book based on her Ph.D. dissertation. The publications consider various aspects of the issues in the monographic work. The research has played the role of a basis for the writing of the monograph, without necessarily repeating its parts. They demonstrate the applicant's interest both in the field of human security in general and in relation to various aspects of it, including environmental security.

### 3. Citation from other authors

From the submitted reference, it is clear that the candidate has indicated citations from other authors within 102.5 points of the minimum required 50 points. These include citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review (65 points) and citation in a non-refereed journal with scientific review (37.5 points).

### **III. Academic and teaching activity**

The candidate meets the requirements for class and non-auditory hours worked, as well as work in the electronic training module "MOODLE - NBU". The feedback on her in the student surveys is positive, with an average score being 4.85 out of 5. The candidate regularly organizes thematic study trips for the students of National and International Security Department of NBU in cooperation with colleagues from other departments at NBU and part-time teachers.

### **IV. Administrative and public activity**

Currently, the candidate is a member of the Faculty Council of the Bachelor's Faculty of the NBU, a member of the Program Board of the National and International Security Department of NBU in the period 2017-2022, and from 2022, the director of the Program Board of the National and International Security Department of NBU. My impressions of her work as the director of the Program Council of National and International Security Department of NBU are excellent. Dr. Sidova is actively involved in all National and International Security Department activities (e.g. organizing the annual scientific conferences in 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023), showing initiative in a number of cases (e.g. having a leading role in the Student Discussion Forum). She made an important contribution to the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NBU, which is the basis for the implementation of student internships, as well as between the "Campaign A21" foundation and the NBU.

The candidate is a member of the Bulgarian Community for Liberal Democracy.

### **V. Personal impressions of the candidate**

I know the candidate in his capacity as a doctoral student and teacher at National and International Security Department of NBU. I am convinced that she has the potential for further academic development in her chosen field, thus competent for the academic position of "associate professor".

**VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activity and achievements of the candidate**

I allow myself to make a recommendation that the candidate may want to take into consideration in the next edition of the monograph "Human security through European territorial cooperation: benefits, challenges, prospects (following the example of the Republic of Bulgaria)". Key recommendations she makes for more effective use of European Territorial Cooperation to promote various aspects of human security should be clearly outlined in the conclusion. At the same time, it should be noted that this recommendation and other comments on the materials submitted for the competition by the candidate do not affect my conviction that Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Sidova should be appointed to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 9.1. "National and International Security".

**Conclusion**

In view of the above, I express my positive assessment. I believe that the monograph and the presented articles meet the requirements of ZRASRB for appointment to the the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 9.1. "National and International Security", announced in State Gazette No. 28 of 04/02/2024. I recommend to the scientific jury to propose to the NBU Academic Council to elect Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dafinka Vasileva Sidova as an "Associate Professor" in the indicated professional field.

June 28, 2024

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