

OPINION

by prof. Virginia Ivanova Zhelyazkova, DSc

of the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "associate professor" at the VUZF University - Sofia in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences professional area, 3.7. Administration and Management (Tourism Management and Innovation)

In the competition announced in the State Gazette, no. 52 of 05.07.2022 and on the website of VUZF University - Sofia (VUZF), Radostina Dimitrova, Ph.D., from VUZF is participating as the only candidate.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate

The only candidate under the current procedure, assistant professor Radostina Dimitrova, Ph.D., submitted the following documents and materials in connection with the competition:

- Autobiography;
- Diploma for acquired educational and scientific degree "Philosophiae Doctor" (Ph.D.);
- Habilitation thesis on the topic of the announced competition;
- Monographic work, different from the main habilitation work;
- Book based on the dissertation work for the award of the Ph.D.;
- Other publications related to the competition and their summaries - a total of five independently developed articles and reports, of which three in English and two in Bulgarian language;

- Reference to the fulfillment of the national minimum requirements laid down in the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation;
- Reference to contributions in scientific publications;
- Reference to the citations of scientific works in publications of other scientists;
- Employment certificate;
- Information on the candidate's participation in various projects;
- Other administrative documents accompanying the procedure.

The number and type of the applicant's scientific publications, as well as the available citations of her works in the publications of other authors, are sufficient for the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements laid down in the LDASRB and the Regulations for its implementation. At the time of preparation of this opinion, there is no information that would give grounds to doubt the authenticity of Dr. Dimitrova's publications.

Dr. Dimitrova holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in tourism from the University of National and World Economy – Sofia (UNWE). After that, she continued her development in the educational and scientific degree "Ph.D." in the same scientific area again at UNWE.

Dr. Dimitrova combines academic activity with work in the tourism business, where she has six years of experience, and has joined the academic staff of VUZF in 2021, leading lectures and exercises in various disciplines from the field of management and marketing in Bulgarian and in English language. During the short time she taught, Dr. Dimitrova proved her qualities and competence as a lecturer. This is evident from the information available in the anonymous surveys of student opinion, which are carried out at VUZF at the end of each semester.

2. General characteristics of the applicant's activity

Dr. Dimitrova's main habilitation work is titled "Crisis Management in Tourism in the Conditions of COVID-19". The issue of crisis management in tourism has become particularly important in recent years following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism industry has been greatly affected by the overall health crisis, by the restrictive measures that have been imposed on the movement of

the population between individual cities and countries, and by the introduction of numerous other restrictions. The topic is not yet sufficiently researched, analyzes are yet to be made on how successful crisis management in tourism has been in individual countries and segments. For Bulgaria, tourism is an important industry, forming a significant part of the GDP. Therefore, the work presented for consideration is current and timely.

The monograph consists of an introduction, two chapters and a conclusion. The introduction defines the research thesis and hypotheses, goals, object and subject of the research. The methodology to be applied and the nature of the sources used are indicated.

The exposition is structured logically and consistently. The first chapter is devoted to some basic theoretical positions from the field of management in tourism in the context of the global pandemic of COVID-19. In the focus of the second chapter, the results of an empirical study, which the author does specifically on crisis management in tourism in Bulgaria, are presented. The exposition in both chapters is distributed proportionately in separate subsections that reflect the logic of the author's thought. A total of 100 sources from Bulgarian and foreign scientists and researchers were studied, which shows the author's very good knowledge of the problem she chose as the topic of her book.

The work is up-to-date, the exposition is interestingly presented in a very clear and coherent way. This makes it easier for the reader to enter the researched problem and contributes significantly to the practical value of the work. The very clear structuring of the exposition into separate points and sub-points is striking, which allows the literal dissection of the problems that are the subject of the analysis and insight into them.

The author undoubtedly reaches some important, mostly scientific and applied, results:

- The main factors influencing the demand and supply of tourist services in the context of a global health crisis are outlined;
- The impact of the pandemic on key sub-sectors of tourism is presented: hospitality, tour operator and travel agency activities, as well as on various tourist destinations;
- The main factors that affect the tourism business specifically in the pandemic situation have been analyzed and systematized. Special attention is given

here to technological, political and economic, socio-cultural, behavioral and environmental factors.

The main merit of the author in this work of hers is the presentation of a number of important practical aspects of management in tourism in a situation of a global health crisis and giving specific recommendations for dealing with such situations. The work is interesting and valuable for everyone who works in the field of tourism precisely for this reason.

Theoretically, the principles of crisis management in tourism are outlined in the context of the unprecedented global health crisis. In practical terms, the author's contributions are in the presentation of an overview of the situation in the tourism industry in Bulgaria, as well as in the measures proposed by her to be taken in order to minimize the impact of external shocks, such as a health crisis.

The other monographic work that the candidate submitted for consideration by the scientific jury in connection with the present procedure is entitled: "Management of innovations in the tourism industry in the perspective of the XXI century". In the focus of this monograph, the author places innovations in tourism in the context of dynamic processes in the tourism industry, characteristic of recent years. Dr. Dimitrova analyzes the emergence of new needs for tourist services, new preferences of the customers of the tourism business in their connection with the development of digital technologies, with global political processes, even with the topic of environmental protection. This research by Dr. Dimitrova is current and interesting, as it presents an interdisciplinary view of her chosen topic.

The remaining scientific publications complement the image of the candidate as a promising young scientist who has clear and prominent interests in the field of the announced competition with a focus on management in the tourism sector.

3. Critical remarks, questions and recommendations

I have no criticisms of the candidate's work. I have the following questions:

1. How has the global pandemic of COVID-19 changed the demand for tourist services in Bulgaria?
2. Give an example of one lasting consequence on consumer preferences as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above, I give my positive assessment of the materials provided for consideration in connection with the present procedure and vote "FOR" the occupation of the academic position of "associate professor" in 3. Social, economic and legal sciences professional direction 3.7. Administration and Management (Management and Innovations in Tourism) by Assistant Professor Radostina Dimitrova

30.11.2022

Sofia

Prepared the opinion: (s)

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