Appendix 2.26

WRITTEN STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Dr Veronika Spasova Spasova
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on the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic post of 'associate professor' in
the field of higher education – 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,
in the professional area – 3.4. Social Work,
specialisation – Social Work (Counselling and Competence in Social Work).

In the competition for the post of associate professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue 53 of 9 June 2026, and on the website of the Technical University of Gabrovo for the needs of the Department of Social and Economic Sciences at the Faculty of Economics, Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Nikolaeva Tsoneva is the sole candidate.

All requirements set out in the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADSRB) and the Regulations for its implementation were complied with when the competition was announced.

1. An overview of the content and findings in the papers presented

The candidate, Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Tsoneva, is submitting a body of academic work for the competition for the post of Associate Professor, comprising 20 publications, including 2 monographs, 7 articles and 11 academic papers. The works are organised into two main thematic areas: 1. 'Counselling and the development of professional competences in social work', with 9 of the publications, including the candidate's monograph, falling within this area of interest; 2. 'Competence-oriented models and social interventions in working with vulnerable groups', to which 12 publications relate. The materials submitted for the competition also include one textbook and one teaching aid authored by the candidate, as well as one teaching aid co-authored by the candidate. The submitted research and materials correspond to the subject area of the competition and fully meet the minimum national requirements for the post of 'associate professor' and the minimum requirements of the Technical University of Gabrovo.

2. General description of the candidate's activities

2.1. Teaching and educational activities (training undergraduates and PhD students)

Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Tsoneva has submitted supporting documentation for the competition for the academic post of 'Associate Professor', which demonstrates her diverse and active teaching and educational activities. The candidate is the lead lecturer for 3 compulsory and 9 elective modules at Bachelor's degree level and for 9 compulsory and 7 elective modules at Master's degree level. She has achieved a high level of classroom teaching hours – 728.1 hours for the 2025–2026 academic year and 681.1 hours planned for 2026–2027. She has developed 50 study programmes, both independently and in collaboration with others, between 2017 and 2026. She is the programme director for three Master's programmes: 'Social Activities', 'Social Work and European Policies' and 'Social Innovation and Social Policies'. Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Tsoneva is also actively involved with students on the 'Bachelor's' and 'Master's' degree programmes: she is a tutor for students on various courses for the period 2020–2026; she has supervised 22 postgraduate students and acted as a reviewer for 13 postgraduate theses between

2020 and 2026; under her supervision, 27 students have presented papers at the Student Research Conference at the Technical University of Gabrovo. The candidate has served on committees for accreditation, the administration of state examinations, and the admission of prospective students to Master's degree programmes. She has completed training courses on various topics that build upon and expand her knowledge and competences in her areas of academic interest. Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Tsoneva is highly qualified to take up the academic post in the competition for the position of 'Associate Professor'.

2.2. Research and applied research activities

The candidate's research and applied work encompasses a wide range of activities. Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Tsoneva has submitted 20 publications for the competition, including: 2 publications in journals that are peer-reviewed and indexed in world-renowned scientific databases; 1 study; 7 articles and 10 conference papers. The majority of the publications (17) are solo works. She is the author of a habilitation thesis – a monograph – as well as 1 textbook, 1 study guide and 1 teaching aid, all co-authored. The candidate has participated in 1 national project as a lecturer, developing a lecture course and digital resources for the subject 'Social Innovation and Macro-Practices in Social Work with Children, Young People and Families'. She is a member of working groups on 10 research projects at the Technical University of Gabrovo for the period 2014–2026. She has served as a reviewer of research papers for the UNITECH International Scientific Conference (2019 – 4 papers; 2020 – 2 papers; 2021 – 2 papers; 2022 – 4 papers; 2023 – 2 papers; 2024 – 4 papers; 2025 – 4 papers). The 14 citations of the publications submitted for the competition are also indicative of the research and applied work of Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Nikolova.

2.3. Implementation activities

The research projects in which the candidate is involved focus on investigating various issues and challenges in social work and are practical in nature, with applications in both student teaching and direct social work.

3. Contributions (scientific, scientific-applied, applied).

Significance of the contributions to science and practice. The contributions of Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Tsoneva's research work can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, the author presents a comprehensive model for understanding counselling as a concept, process and social phenomenon [M1]. She clarifies the significance of artificial intelligence for the development of educational technologies in higher education and social practice [2], [9]. She outlines key theories, models and standards for school social work [13]. She demonstrates the need for ongoing professional development for specialists working with vulnerable groups [17], [19].

Secondly, the role and significance of social, emotional and intercultural competences in social work are highlighted, as is the need to incorporate them into students' training [3], [10], [U1]. It demonstrates the importance of developing emotional resilience in social work and presents a set of tools for building this resilience during professional training and practice [14]. The author has developed a textbook and a study guide for mastering social competences [U1], [U3].

Thirdly, the author conducts an in-depth examination of models and social interventions for social work with children, families and vulnerable communities: he explains the phenomenon of social innovation and its practical application [4]; he develops a competency framework for the resilience approach [17]; defines the concept of parental alienation as a complex socio-psychological and legal phenomenon [6]; through research, demonstrates the need for comprehensive, social, educational and preventive approaches in working with children with

special educational needs [11], children placed in family-type residential care centres for children and young people [12]; and children and young people exhibiting aggressive behaviour [16].

Fourthly, the author's research interests focus on innovative social interventions that can be applied in social practice with individuals from various vulnerable groups [15], [19].

4. Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution

The candidate's published research enriches the theory and practice of counselling in the helping professions, the application of innovative interventions in social work, and the use of educational technologies in the training of social work professionals.

5. Critical comments and recommendations

I have no critical comments regarding the candidacy of Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Tsoneva. My recommendation is that she should continue to work in her areas of academic interest and contribute to the development of theory and practice in social work, including through the training of future professionals in the social sector.

6. Personal impressions

I do not know Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Tsoneva, but from the documents submitted for the competition, I have the impression of a candidate who is competent in the academic field of the competition, with consistent and in-depth exploration of innovative approaches and models both in practical social work and in the training of students in this professional field.

7. Conclusion:

The candidate has submitted all the necessary documents, as well as evidence of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the Technical University of Gabrovo for the academic post of 'associate professor'.

In view of the above, I propose that Senior Assistant Professor Dr Zhaneta Nikolaeva Tsoneva be appointed as an 'associate professor' in the field of higher education – 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field – 3.4. Social Work, specialism – 'Counselling and Competence in Social Work'.

28.10.2026 Member of the jury:

/Assoc. Prof. Veronika Spasova PhD/