Appendix 2.26

ACADEMIC OPINION

by Prof. Zhivko Velichkov Zhechev, PhD
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of the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the academic position of Associate Professor in
higher education area 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,
professional field 3.4. Social Activities,
specialty: Counselling and Competence in Social Work

Chief Assistant Professor Zhaneta Nikolaeva Tsoneva, PhD, is the candidate in the competition for the academic position 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.

1. Overview of the content and results of the submitted works.

Chief Assistant Professor Zhaneta Nikolaeva Tsoneva's scholarly output focuses on issues directly related to the development of social work and the professional education of specialists in this field. A central place is occupied by the monograph "Counselling in the Helping Professions", which examines the theoretical foundations, organisational aspects and professional dimensions of counselling. Her other publications investigate social competencies, work with vulnerable groups, social innovations and the application of modern technologies in education. The empirical studies complement the theoretical arguments with findings and recommendations for improving training and professional practice. These works are marked by thematic coherence, relevance and a focus on addressing specific issues in the social sphere. Taken together, they constitute valuable scholarly output consistent with the profile of the advertised competition.

2. General assessment of the candidate's activities.

Chief Assistant Professor Tsoneva's professional development is characterised by a sustained combination of teaching, research and organisational responsibilities. Her academic career at the Technical University of Gabrovo demonstrates a gradual expansion of professional responsibilities and the acquisition of competencies in various areas of university activity. The submitted materials attest to active work both on updating educational content and on examining socially significant research issues. Her involvement in professional associations and academic initiatives further demonstrates long-term commitment to the development of the field. I consider her overall activity to be consistent with the professional profile and responsibilities associated with the academic position of Associate Professor.

2.1. Teaching and educational activities (work with students and doctoral candidates).

The candidate's teaching is characterised by a substantial workload and a diverse range of subjects taught in Social Activities. An important indicator of her curriculum-development capacity is the preparation of 50 course syllabi between 2017 and 2026. Her academic experience includes supervision of 22 graduation students, assessment of 13 graduation theses and organisational responsibility for Master's programmes. Participation in student research sessions and academic administration confirms her active role in the university educational environment.

The textbook and teaching aids she has authored provide additional methodological support for acquiring knowledge and practical competencies. These achievements justify describing her teaching and educational work as effective and professionally significant.

2.2. Scientific and applied research activities.

Chief Assistant Professor Tsoneva's research activity is represented by publications in Bulgarian and international scholarly outlets, conference participation and research projects. A significant component is her involvement in a national project on the digital transformation of humanities and social science education, as well as ten university research projects. Her studies address competency-based approaches, social interventions, counselling and the professional well-being of helping professionals. The cited references to her work provide additional evidence that her findings are being used in scholarly literature. Her reviewing activities for the international UNITECH conference also demonstrate involvement in academic evaluation. These results warrant a positive assessment of the candidate's research potential and productivity.

2.3. Implementation and knowledge-transfer activities.

The applied dimensions of Chief Assistant Professor Tsoneva's activities are primarily evident in the development of educational resources and methodological solutions for training social work specialists. One concrete outcome is her participation in producing a lecture course and digital resources for "Intellectual Property in the Social Sphere" within a national educational project. The practice-oriented character of her teaching publications creates opportunities to use these approaches in teaching and students' independent study. Her research publications also offer guidance for implementing competency-based models in social services. These activities indicate genuine potential for transferring research results into educational and professional practice. I assess this applied orientation positively as a significant aspect of the candidate's academic work.

3. Contributions (scientific, scientific-applied and practical): significance for research and practice.

The scientific, scientific-applied and practical contributions identified by the candidate are systematically presented and correspond to her scholarly output. They include a conceptual examination of counselling in the helping professions, investigation of links between professional and socio-emotional competencies, and the development of approaches to supporting vulnerable groups. Their scientific-applied importance lies in the proposed competency frameworks, comparative analyses and opportunities to improve social interventions. Their practical dimension is primarily associated with the development of educational resources and practice-oriented models for professional preparation. I fully accept the stated contributions, consider them clearly and accurately formulated, and believe they possess the necessary scientific justification and practical significance. They represent positive outcomes of the candidate's research and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in professional field 3.4. Social Activities.

4. Assessment of the candidate's individual contribution.

The documentation makes it possible to identify Chief Assistant Professor Tsoneva's individual contribution to the scholarly and educational-methodological output. Of the 20 research publications submitted for the competition, 17 are single-authored, providing compelling quantitative evidence of her independence as a researcher. Her authorship of the habilitation monograph, textbook and independently authored teaching aid further confirms her ability to develop complete scholarly and educational works. In collaborative publications, her individual contribution relates to specific thematic areas and clearly defined authorial responsibilities. On this

basis, I consider her individual contribution substantial, documented and consistent with the requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor.

5. Critical remarks and recommendations.

The submitted scholarly works and documentation of Chief Assistant Professor Tsoneva's academic activity give me no grounds for substantial critical remarks. Her studies are consistent with the subject area of the competition and demonstrate the required professional competence. As a direction for further development, I would recommend extending empirical research to larger samples and comparative studies involving multiple universities. Deepening international academic partnerships would also help increase the visibility of her research findings. In teaching, I consider the further development of interactive methods, digital resources and opportunities for students to participate in research initiatives particularly promising. These recommendations seek to build on achievements already made and broaden the opportunities for future academic development.

6. Personal impressions.

I have no direct personal impressions of Chief Assistant Professor Tsoneva; however, her documented academic achievements and the favourable opinions expressed about her within the professional community give me grounds to regard her as a responsible, competent and promising lecturer who deserves respect and high professional recognition.

7. Conclusion:

In view of the foregoing, I recommend that Chief Assistant Professor Zhaneta Nikolaeva Tsoneva, PhD, be elected to the academic position of Associate Professor in higher education area 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.4. Social Activities, specialty "Counselling and Competence in Social Work".

24 October 2026 Member of the Academic Jury:

/Prof. Zhivko Zhechev, PhD/