

## **OPINION**

regarding the candidacy

of

Dr. Irina Topuzova,

Chief Assistant Professor at the International Higher Business School, Botevgrad

for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor", in the field of  
higher

education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology

(Work and Organizational Psychology)

announced in the State Gazette, issue 8 of January 28, 2025, for the needs of the International Business  
School, Botevgrad

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Varna \* 2025

## 1. General presentation of the candidate and the materials received in the competition

The competition for the position of "Associate Professor", in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology (Work and Organizational Psychology) was announced in the State Gazette, issue 8 of January 28, 2025, for the needs of the International Business School, Botevgrad.

The opinion was assigned by decision of the Scientific Jury, determined by Order 032/31.03.2025 of the Rector of the International Business School, Botevgrad.

The only candidate in the competition is Dr. Irina Topuzova, Chief Assistant Professor at the International Business School, Botevgrad.

Irina Topuzova holds a Bachelor's Degree in Primary School Pedagogy and a Master's Degree in Psychology, obtained at the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad.

In 2016, she obtained the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.2. Psychology at the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad. The topic of the dissertation is "Educational reform and motivation of the university lectures".

Her professional path began in 2007 at the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad as Administrative Head of the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Philosophy. Since 2011, she has been a lecturer at the university, successively holding the academic positions of "Assistant Professor" and "Chief Assistant Professor" in professional field 3.2. Psychology - Work and Organizational Psychology. Since 2021 and currently holds the academic position of "Chief Assistant Professor" at the International Business School (IBS), Botevgrad.

Dr. Irina Topuzova is an external evaluator of project proposals under the Erasmus + Program at the Center for Human Resources Development (CHRD) - Sofia, a trainer and expert in many projects funded by the European Union. In the period 2019-2020, she is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal "Psychological Thought", published by the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski". She is the secretary of the section "Work and Organizational Psychology" at the Society of Psychologists in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The documents submitted by the candidate for the competition meet the requirements of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, for occupying the academic position of "associate professor".

Dr. Irina Topuzova proposes 14 scientific papers in connection with the competition, as follows:

1. **Habilitation thesis:** Topuzova, I. 2025. Organizational Culture and Leadership. Cultural Leadership Code. Botevgrad: Publishing House of the Bulgarian University of Management. ISBN: 978-619-7610-34-5 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15068456>.
2. **Monograph:** Topuzova, I. 2025. Psychological Dimensions of Organizational Effectiveness. Botevgrad: Publishing House of the Bulgarian University of Management. ISBN 978-619-7610-40-6 Available at: <https://zenodo.org/records/15105625>.
3. **Published chapter of a collective monograph:** Topuzova, I. Tan, M., Sağlamer, G., Çağlayan, H., O'Hagan, C., O'Connor, P., Baisner, L., Myers, E. S., Apostolov, G. (2020). Family, Career Progression and Gendered Academic Citizenship. Publisher Name Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Print

ISBN 978-3-030-52599-6; Online ISBN 978-3-030-52600-9 Available at:  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52600-9\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52600-9_5).

4. **Published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor":** Topuzova, I. 2024. Motivation management. Application of a model for motivational diagnosis in a university environment. Botevgrad: Publishing House of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. ISBN: 978-619-7610-30-7 Available at:  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14713163>.
5. **Articles and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information** – 2 in English in co-authorship.
6. **Articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes or in specialized publications for classified information** – 6 scientific articles, of which 3 are independent and the rest are co-authored. Of these, 2 are in English.
7. **Studies published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information** – 1 in co-authorship in English.
8. **Studies published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes or in specialized publications for classified information** – 1 independent one.

A report on the noted citations is presented, as well as the other required documents for participation in the competition. The report on citations shows that some of Dr. Irina Topuzova's works are abundantly cited in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information - 114 times in Scopus and 73 in Web of Science. These data testify to the wide response of the publications among the scientific community in our country and abroad and are a good attestation of the significance of the researched problems.

The scientific works presented in the competition are outside the works indicated in the abstract of the dissertation for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" and are accepted for evaluation. The published book based on the defended dissertation work for the award of the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" is not evaluated, but participates in the formation of the opinion on the candidate's compliance with the minimum national requirements for holding the Academic Position of "Associate Professor".

With the scientific papers submitted for participation in the competition, the acquired Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" and the noted citations, Dr. Irina Topuzova meets the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position "Associate Professor", field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, according to the Annex to Art. 1a, para. 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (New - SG, issue 56 of 2018, in force from 06.07.2018) - Minimum national requirements for the scientific, teaching and/or artistic or sports activities of candidates for acquiring a scientific degree and for occupying the academic positions "Chief Assistant Professor", "Associate Professor" and "Professor" in field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology.

The educational profile and the accumulated professional experience of Dr. Irina Topuzova as a lecturer in the higher education system and as a researcher, are in line with the requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 3.2. Psychology, according to Art. 53, para. (1), item 1 and item 2 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Act on the Development of

the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and are a prerequisite for her subsequent professional development.

## **2. General characteristics and assessment of the candidate's scientific production, scientific and scientific-applied contributions**

The scientific production of Dr. Irina Topuzova, with which she participates in the competition for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor", is a set of conceptual and empirical developments related to "hot topics" from the thematic field of work and organizational psychology. The empirical verification of the theoretical models being built and the applied orientation of the research results are very impressive. Thus, the scientific works of the candidate in the competition create prerequisites for the transfer of modern scientific and applied scientific achievements in the field of labor and organizational psychology in teaching in higher education, as well as in the practice of organizations in optimizing organizational culture, leadership practices, human resource management, etc.

Among the leading problems developed by Dr. Irina Topuzova with a contributing character in the scientific works presented in the competition are:

- *Formulation and confirmation of the concept of a cultural leadership code*: the dynamics of the relationships between the cultural dimensions of organizations and leadership practices have been thoroughly studied, with the cultural leadership code being presented as a unique combination of the specific type of organizational culture and leadership style, which together form both the management practice and the overall dynamics, character and identity of the organization;
- *The functioning of universities as organizations*: a comprehensive analysis of the organizational culture in higher education and the motivational factors in an academic environment has been made; The career development of women in academia is examined, identifying existing barriers; the role of mentoring and sponsorship in the academic sector for the career development of young scientists, especially women and representatives of marginalized groups, is presented.
- *The role of work-life balance on the psychological well-being and organizational commitment of employees*: the role of implementing work-life balance policies in organizations, which improve not only employee satisfaction with work, but also their productivity, is analyzed.
- *The relationship between psychological factors and organizational effectiveness*: organizational factors and individual characteristics that influence the effectiveness of management models in the public sector are studied.

The conceptualized models in the works proposed for review by Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Topuzova and the analyzed data from empirical studies are a serious knowledge base in the field of human behavior and the functioning of people in an organizational context. The results of these studies contribute to enriching contemporary knowledge in work and organizational psychology and are useful for the applied goals of specialists who work "in the field".

*I have not noticed and have no information about plagiarism in the scientific works submitted for the competition. In my opinion, literary sources have been used correctly.*

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

My personal impressions of Dr. Irina Topuzova are formed mainly from her participation in scientific forums that I have attended and from her work in the Society of Psychologists in the Republic of Bulgaria. Irina Topuzova is a young scientist with very good theoretical and methodological training, which she demonstrates both in terms of organizing and conducting empirical research, and in presenting the results of them at scientific forums. As secretary of the section on "Work and Organizational Psychology" at the Society of Psychologists in the Republic of Bulgaria, she is consistent and persistent in organizing the life of the section.

I am convinced that the International Business School would benefit from the appointment of Dr. Irina Topuzova to the academic position of "Associate Professor". As a habilitated person, she will be given the opportunity to even more significantly develop her potential as a researcher and teacher.

### **CONCLUSION**

Bearing in mind the above in the opinion, I draw the following conclusions related to the candidacy of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Topuzova for the academic position of "Associate Professor", field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology:

1. Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Topuzova meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor", field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology, according to the Annex to Art. 1a, para. 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.
2. Has accumulated professional experience as a lecturer in a higher school and as a researcher in accordance with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor".
3. Offers for review scientific production with significant scientific and practical contributions.
4. Is recognizable as a researcher not only in our country, but also abroad.

All this gives me reason for a positive assessment of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Irina Topuzova, as a candidate for the academic position of "Associate Professor".

In this regard, I recommend that the Scientific Jury propose, in accordance with the procedure established at the International Business School, Botevgrad, that Dr. Irina Topuzova be elected to the academic position of "Associate Professor", in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.2. Psychology (Work and Organizational psychology).

17.04.2025

Varna

Prepared the opinion:

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