

EXPERT OPINION

by Prof. Tsvetan Iliev Petkov, PhD

of the academic and scientific-applied activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Nikolova Usheva

in connection with a competition announced by the International Higher Business School - Botevgrad for the academic position of "professor" in the "State Gazette" No. 8/28.01.2025 in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.7. Administration and management (Human resources management and organizational processes)

The opinion has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Low on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its Implementation (RILDASRB), as well as in connection with Order 38/02.04.2025 of the Rector of the IBS on determining the composition of the scientific jury.

Candidate requirements

(art. 29 LDASRB and art. 60 RILDASRB)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Nikolova Usheva was born on 01.11.1970. In 1991, she graduated in Russian Philology from the Komi State Pedagogical Institute (KSPI), Syktyvkar - Russia, after which in 1993 she defended her scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy of Pedagogy" at the Ural Pedagogical University, Yekaterinburg – Russia.

The candidate in the competition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. M. Usheva, began her professional career in 1993 as a part-time lecturer at Southwestern University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad. At the same time, she works as a "School Psychologist / Pedagogical Advisor" at the "S. P. Korolyov" High School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Blagoevgrad. She has experience in the public sector, where in the period 2005 - 2008 she was "Head of the Education Department" / Chief Expert "Education, Youth Activities and Sports" in the Municipality of Blagoevgrad.

The academic career of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Usheva began in 2008, initially as a part-time lecturer in "Applied Psychology, Business Management and Business Etiquette" at the College of Tourism – Blagoevgrad. From September 2009 to November 2017, she was a Chief Assistant Professor at the Department of Management and Marketing at the Faculty of Economics at the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski" – Blagoevgrad. From November 2017 to August 2024, she held the academic position of "associate professor" at SWU - Blagoevgrad in the Department of 3.7. Administration and Management. From August 26, 2024 to the present, she holds the academic position of "associate professor" at IBS – Botevgrad.

In the period from 2013 to the present, Assoc. Prof. Dr. M. Usheva has participated in the development and implementation of numerous scientific projects, funded by ESIF and national sources.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. M. Usheva is the only candidate in the competition. The verification of documents shows that no violations were committed in the competition. The legal requirements and the rules for holding academic positions at the MVBV - Botevgrad have been complied with.

Requirements for learning activities

(art. 29 and art. 29 „b” LDASRB and art. 61 RILDASRB)

At the IBS, Assoc. Prof. Dr. M. Usheva teaches the following disciplines: Human Resources Management, Supply Chain Management, Global Supply Chains, Organizational Management, Innovation and Creativity in Human Resources Management, Strategic Management and Development of People in the Organization, and Human Resources Management in Healthcare. The candidate has published 2 textbooks that are directly related to the subjects taught.

The academic workload of Assoc. Prof. Usheva corresponds to the standards adopted by the IBS, as well as the requirements of the LDASRB for holding the academic position of "Professor".

Requirements for scientific and research activities

(art. 29 and art. 29 „b” LDASRB and art. 60 and art. 61 RILDASRB)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Usheva presents **29 scientific publications** for review. Of these, **4 monographs, 2 textbooks, 1 study, 5 articles – referenced and indexed in Web of Science, 11 articles – referenced and indexed in other databases, and 6 reports presented at national and international scientific conferences.** The publication list submitted by the candidate for the competition shows that 9 publications are in Bulgarian, 18 in English and 2 in Russian. All of them have found a place on the pages of prestigious Bulgarian and international scientific journals.

The candidate in the competition has presented **4 main monographic works** - "Multigenerational Human Resources Management" in 3 volumes and "Optimization of Organizational Processes in the Modern Work Environment". The total volume of the four monographs is remarkable – 2 271 pages.

The first volume, "Multigenerational Human Resources Management: from Generation T to Generation Alpha. Individual Psychological Characteristics of Generations," provides an in-depth analysis of generational differences in the context of human resources management, focusing on the individual psychological characteristics of Generations T, X, Y, Z, and Alpha. It examines the social, economic, and cultural factors that shape the values, work styles, and motivation of different generations, both in a global and Bulgarian context.

The study is based on empirical data collected through panel interviews and surveys with 1,080 respondents from 15 professional fields, using comparative analysis, historical and psychological approaches. The concept of a "transgenerational leader" has been developed, who effectively integrates employees from different generations and builds an adaptive and sustainable work environment.

The book offers practical guidance for HR professionals, managers, and organizational leaders, including strategies for selection, motivation, training, and intergenerational communication that promote productivity and engagement in multigenerational organizations. The work contributes to a better understanding of generational dynamics and the creation of effective management practices in the modern work environment.

In the second volume, "Multigenerational Human Resources Management: from Generation T to Generation Alpha. Peculiarities and Motivational Specificity of Generations", the study of generational differences is expanded, focusing on the motivational factors of Generation T, X, Y, Z and Alpha and their influence on work engagement, productivity and organizational culture. Financial incentives, personal development, work-life balance, recognition and career opportunities are examined as key elements for engagement and satisfaction across age groups. Special attention is paid to the dynamic changes in motivational

attitudes brought about by socio-economic transformations, technological progress and globalization.

The proposed strategies for personalized motivation and training deserve attention. They create conditions for improving multigenerational cooperation and efficiency in teams and can be implemented by HR specialists, managers, and organizational leaders.

The third book in the trilogy is titled "Multigenerational Human Resources Management: From Generation T to Generation Alpha. Stimulating the Motivation of Different Generations in the Work Environment." In it, the author deepens the study of motivation in the multigenerational work environment, emphasizing the specific factors that stimulate the engagement and productivity of generations T, X, Y, Z, and Alpha. Financial incentives, work-life balance, personal development, recognition and career opportunities are analyzed as fundamental elements for the motivation and satisfaction of different generations. Special attention is paid to the dynamically changing attitudes and expectations generated by socio-economic transformations, technological innovations and global trends.

I can define the monograph "Optimization of Organizational Processes in the Modern Work Environment" as a comprehensive, in-depth and interdisciplinary scientific study that examines some of the most current challenges facing the management of modern organizations. The author develops a concept for sustainable organizational management through optimization of internal processes, proposing a theoretical model linked to practical solutions. The study combines historical-logical analysis, systematization of good practices and a critical review of leading scientific paradigms. The emphasis on the connection between digitalization, generational diversity, and the need for adaptive processes is particularly valuable. With its depth of the issues under consideration, I believe that the work enriches the scientific literature with original definitions and classifications, reflecting the complexity of the organizational environment in the context of dynamic technological and social changes. The author offers strategic guidance and identifies key factors for organizational effectiveness, formulating innovative solutions to achieve operational agility and long-term sustainability. The developed conceptual model provides a basis for application in both business and the public sphere. The value of the research also lies in its applicability in building adaptive and future sustainable organizational strategies.

Assoc. Prof. Usheva's serious scientific and research activity is also indicated by: **one study, 16 articles and 6 reports**, presented in the list of publications for participation in the competition. They overlap to a significant extent with the content of the monographic studies already mentioned above. In addition, the significance of the publication activity is emphasized

by the fact that the majority of articles and reports are in English, and 5 of them have found a place on the pages of prestigious international publications, referenced in the Web of Science. In support of this conclusion, the citations presented in the reference list include 123 references and citations of publications by Assoc. Prof. Usheva by Bulgarian and foreign authors. One of them is cited in a publication referenced in Web of Science.

A second important element of the scientific research and teaching activity is the educational literature with which the candidate participates in the competition. These are **two textbooks**: "*Management Psychology: Skills, Diagnostics, Impacts*" and "*Hospitality in the Tourism Industry, Part I*". The first textbook combines theoretical analysis and practical approaches, examining the psychological mechanisms of decision-making, motivation, communication, and team management. It examines the main socio-psychological factors that influence leadership, organizational climate, and conflict resolution. The author's approach creates an opportunity for the development of soft skills, empathy, and behavioral flexibility - key qualities for the modern manager.

The second textbook was developed in co-authorship and is aimed at the professional training of personnel in the tourism sector. The publication is consistent with the standards for professional education and provides up-to-date knowledge about the nature, structure and specifics of the tourism industry. The two authors combine their expertise in their respective fields to offer a comprehensive educational resource that combines theoretical analysis with a practical and applied focus. The part, developed by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Usheva, focuses on human resource management in tourism and aims to build professional skills and attitudes that meet the needs of modern tourism organizations. Key topics are discussed such as: requirements for staff in the hotel and restaurant industry, selection and hiring of personnel, forms of training and career development, assessment systems, motivation and company culture. Particular attention is paid to the characteristics of the main positions in the sector and the expectations of professional behavior.

I accept the scientific and practical contributions of Assoc. Prof. M. Usheva, presented in the list of documents for participation in the competition, as realistic and actually proven. I can summarize the indicated contributions in 10 thematic areas as the use of fundamental scientific knowledge and its transformation into concrete applied knowledge.

Conclusion

Based on the submitted documents for the competition and the evaluation of the publications accepted for review, the following conclusions can be drawn about the candidate:

- 1) Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Usheva is the only candidate in the competition;
- 2) Holds the scientific and educational degree "Doctor", holds the academic position "Associate Professor" and meets the statutory professional and scientometric requirements;
- 3) Has the necessary classroom and extracurricular employment;
- 4) Has published 4 monographic works and 2 textbooks, which are directly related to the competition.
- 5) Gives lectures on disciplines in the Bachelor's and Master's programs, which are directly related to the competition;
- 6) She has participated in the development and implementation of a number of scientific research projects;
- 7) Scientific output has been presented and accepted for evaluation, including 29 scientific publications, of which 4 monographs, 2 textbooks, and 23 studies, articles and reports.
- 8) A part of the presented works have been published in English.

In conclusion, I believe that the works proposed for review, in terms of their qualitative characteristics, contributions and quantity of publications, fully meet the requirements of the Low on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the regulations of the IBS – Botevgrad. The diverse public, lecturing, methodological, scientific and international activities of the candidate give me reason to confidently assert that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Usheva meets all the criteria and requirements for holding the academic position of "Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.7. Administration and management (Human resources management and organizational processes) in accordance with the Low on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. **On this basis, I support the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Nikolova Usheva to the academic position of "Professor".**

29.04.2025

Sofia

Signature:



/Prof. Tsvetan Iliev, PhD/