



## OPINION

by: Prof. Virginia Ivanova Zhelyazkova, DSc, Ph.D.

**Economic Research Institute, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences**

**Academic Specialty:** 3.8 Economics (Finance, Monetary Circulation, Credit, and Insurance)

**Re:** Competition for the academic position of **Professor** in the professional field **3.7. Administration and Management** (Human Resource Management) at the **International Business School (IBS)**, announced in *State Gazette No. 8/28.01.2025*, with my participation as a member of the scientific jury pursuant to *Order No. 38/02.04.2025* of the Rector of IBS.

### 1. Information about the Competition

The competition was announced to meet the needs of the department at the International Business School (IBS). The academic field is particularly relevant—Human Resource Management in the context of a modern digitalized economy, a multigenerational work environment, and the need for sustainable organizational transformation.

### 2. Brief Information about the Candidate

The sole candidate in the competition is **Associate Professor Dr. Mariana Nikolova Usheva**, a long-standing lecturer and researcher at IBS. Her main scientific focus lies in the following areas: human resource management, managerial psychology, motivation, organizational behavior, and strategic leadership.

### 3. Fulfillment of the Requirements for Holding the Academic Position

#### 3.1 Quantitative Requirements

The candidate presents **29 academic works** totaling **2,831 pages**: four independent monographs, two textbooks, sixteen articles (including five published in journals indexed in Web of Science), one scholarly study, and six conference papers. The predominantly independent nature of the publications, especially the monographs, is a further indicator of research maturity and academic autonomy. In the current procedure, the candidate participates with only a portion of her scientific output, and even so, there is a clear and significant exceeding of the minimum national requirements for appointment to the academic position of *Professor*, as set forth in the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and its Implementation Regulations.

The high citation rate of Assoc. Prof. Usheva's works further attests to her strong academic visibility and recognition.

### 3.2 Qualitative Requirements

The scientific publications demonstrate a high degree of theoretical justification, empirical validity, and interdisciplinary applicability. The works have been published in reputable journals, including internationally recognized scientific editions. The research output is based on original empirical studies, integrated with up-to-date theoretical frameworks, indicating consistency, thematic maturity, and contribution to the academic field. To date, there is no reason to question the authenticity of all the works of the candidate.

### 4. Evaluation of Teaching and Academic Activity

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Usheva has extensive teaching experience, delivering courses in managerial psychology, human resources, and organizational behavior. She actively contributes to the development and updating of curricula, employs modern teaching methods, and uses digital platforms and problem-based learning. She is the author of a textbook on managerial psychology and co-author of another in the field of tourism, both of which are used in the educational process.

Additionally, she performs academic mentoring, supervising coursework and theses, and participates in examination juries and committees—further confirming her commitment to the academic mission.

### 5. Overview of the Submitted Scientific Works

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Usheva's scientific output is characterized by impressive volume and thematic depth. The primary focus of her scholarly work is a **trilogy of interrelated monographs** dedicated to **multigenerational human resource management**. In the first volume, she presents a detailed demographic, psychological, and behavioral profile of five generations—from the so-called “Traditionalists” to “Generation Alpha.” The second monograph analyzes the motivational specifics of each group using an original methodological toolkit, including a survey study and panel interviews involving over a thousand participants. The third volume integrates theory and practice by applying eleven motivational theories to develop personalized HR management strategies. The synergy among the three works forms an **innovative framework** for understanding and managing generational diversity—one of the most pressing challenges in contemporary HR management.

The fourth monograph, *Optimization of Organizational Processes in the Contemporary Work Environment*, also holds significant scientific and applied value. It addresses challenges such as digital transformation, hybrid employment, and the demand for organizational sustainability. The study includes a qualitative analysis of best practices, international models, and theoretical systematization, concluding with an original conceptual model for sustainable management.

Her scientific articles further expand this thematic line, addressing topics such as motivation, organizational behavior, economic resilience of SMEs, crisis management (e.g., COVID-19),

stress, and workplace pressure. Notably, her work exhibits a **high level of interdisciplinarity**, integrating psychology, management, sociology, and economics. Publications in internationally recognized journals confirm her ability to contribute to global academic discourse.

Her textbooks are written in an academic yet accessible style, with clear structure, practical exercises, case studies, and testing tools. The link between her teaching and research activities is both evident and effective.

## **6. Synthesized Evaluation of the Candidate's Main Scientific and Applied Contributions**

The contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Usheva are marked by **systematic research design, depth of insight, and practical relevance**. Her main scientific trajectory centers on multigenerational human resource management, approached through interdisciplinary and empirical lenses.

One of her key contributions is the **creation of an integrated typology of generations** within the labor market, specifically adapted to the Bulgarian social and cultural context. She provides detailed profiles of Generations T, X, Y, Z, and Alpha, analyzing their values, expectations, and motivational tendencies.

A major innovation is her **“6+1 motivational module” model**—a diagnostic tool for measuring motivation across generations. This model has been empirically validated and enables a nuanced interpretation of motivational behavior through dual-scenario analysis (positive and negative).

Her **predictive motivational profile of Generation Alpha**, built from trend analysis and synthesized theory, is forward-looking and unique in the national context. She also achieves a valuable **theoretical synthesis of eleven motivational theories**, applying them in the form of customized HR strategies.

The monograph on organizational process optimization adds further value by proposing a **conceptual model for strategic management** with an emphasis on adaptability and long-term resilience.

Overall, her contributions are theoretically rigorous, methodologically sound, and practically applicable—offering **tools for addressing real-world organizational challenges in the face of demographic shifts and digital change**.

## **7. Main Critical Remarks and Recommendations**

There are no substantial critical remarks. The scientific work is coherent, mature, and well-grounded. It is recommended that the candidate expand her international presence by publishing translations of her monographs in English and participating in international research networks and forums.

## **8. Conclusion**

The candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Nikolova Usheva fully meets all quantitative and qualitative criteria for appointment to the academic position of **Professor**. Her scientific, teaching, and research activities are **contributive, innovative, and of high academic quality**. **I strongly recommend** her appointment to the position of **Professor** in the professional field **3.7. Administration and Management**, specialty **Human Resource Management**.

**Place/Date:** Sofia / May 7, 2025

**Signature:** Prof. Virginia Ivanova Zhelyazkova, DSc, Ph.D.