

STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetoslav Antonov Georgiev, PhD, Medical University – Varna, of the materials provided for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1. Medicine, scientific specialty "Rheumatology"

Subject: competition for the appointment of AD "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Rheumatology" at the Medical University - Plovdiv

Pursuant to Order No. R-2383/11.07.2024 and letter No. R-1700/12.07.2024 from the Vice-Rector NID of MU - Plovdiv, materials were provided for the preparation of opinions regarding the announcement of a procedure for two academic positions "Professor" in the field of higher education 7. Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1. Medicine, specialty "Rheumatology", at the Medical University - Plovdiv. According to the announced competition for the two positions for AP "Professor", two candidates appeared - Associate Professor Rositsa Valerieva Karalilova, PhD and Associate Professor Sevdalina Nikolova Lambova, PhD.

I. Analysis of the candidate's career profile

The candidate, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rositsa Valerieva Karalilova, PhD, DSc, according to the relevant competition, is a member of the academic staff of the "Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases" Department at the Faculty of Medicine of the Medical University of Plovdiv.

Assoc. Dr. Rositsa Karalilova, PhD, graduated in medicine from the Medical University - Plovdiv in 2005. In the same year, she started working as a resident doctor in the Rheumatology Clinic of Kaspela Medical Center, where she has been working ever since. In 2013, after a competition, she was selected as an assistant in the Department of "Propaedeutics of Internal Diseases" at the Medical University of Plovdiv, and in 2018, after a competition, she held the position of Chief Assistant. At the moment, she is responsible for the educational activities of the Department. In 2014, she acquired a specialty in

Rheumatology. In 2018, Assoc. Prof. Karalilova successfully defended her dissertation on the topic "Diagnostic possibilities of new ultrasonographic techniques for the evaluation of skin, joint, peri-articular and lung involvement in Systemic Sclerosis" and received the Doctorate of the National Academy of Sciences. In 2021, after successfully defending a dissertation on the topic "Image and serum biomarkers for lung and joint involvement in patients with Systemic Sclerosis", she obtained the Doctor of Science degree.

Since 2022, she is an Associate Professor at the Department of "Propaedeutics of Internal Medicine" Prof. Dr. Anton Mitov". Since 2023, she has been the President of the Bulgarian Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Association (BAMSU). From January 2024, she is the Deputy Dean for Academic Activities at the Medical Faculty of the Medical University - Plovdiv. Until now, she is the supervisor of six doctoral students and three residents in rheumatology. She is proficient in instrumental methods - ultrasonography, capillaroscopy. Assoc. Prof. Karalilova went through a number of international courses in musculoskeletal ultrasound (Graz, Rome, Madrid, Leeds) and holds an EULAR qualification for Ultrasound Trainers in Rheumatology, and since 2017 she has been a certified European instructor in musculoskeletal ultrasound.

II. General description of the submitted materials for the competition

Prof. Karalilova presented precisely prepared documents. The self-assessment made by the candidate presented in the table testifies that they exceed the minimum national requirements for the scientific and teaching activity of the candidates for the academic position "Professor" in scientific field 7. Health care and sports; Professional direction 7.1. Medicine. respectively significantly above the requirements for the individual indicator groups.

Table 1. Scientific indicators and teaching activity

Group	Indicators	Requirements for Prof.	Assoc. Prof. Karalilova, DSc
A	1. Dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor"	50	50 p.
B	2. Dissertation work for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences"		100 p.
C	3. Habilitation thesis - monograph 4. Habilitation work - scientific publications (not less than 10) in publications that are referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information	100	100 p.
D	5. A published monograph that is not presented as the		234,99 p.

Group	Indicators	Requirements for Prof.	Assoc. Prof. Karalilova, DSc
	main habilitation thesis 6. A published book based on a protected dissertation work for the award of an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" or for the award of a scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" 7. Publications and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information 8. Publications and reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes 9. Published chapter of a collective monograph	250 points	+ 60,5 p.
E	10. Citations or reviews in scientific publications referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information or in monographs and collective volumes 11. Citations in monographs and peer-reviewed collective volumes 12. Citations or reviews in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals	300 points	2760 т. + 10 т. + 35 т.
F	3. Obtained scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" 14. Supervision of a successfully defended doctoral student (n is the number of co-supervisors of the corresponding doctoral student) 15. Acquired medical specialty 16. Participation in a national scientific or educational project 17. Participation in an international scientific or educational project 18. Management of a national scientific or educational project 19. Management of an international scientific or educational project 20. Published university textbook or textbook that is used in the school network 21. Published university textbook or textbook that is used on the school network 22. Training of interns, specialists and doctoral students (seminars and practical classes)	140 points	40 т. + 80 т. + 40 т. + 160 т. + 40 т. 1,25 + 1,21 = + 2,46 т. + 555,5 часа = 555,5 т.
G	Teaching activity: Study load (lectures and exercises): Academic position:	200 points (2 у. X 1 т/час) 200 points (assoc. prof – 100 т. за 1 год.)	1035 часа = 1035 т. + 200 точки
	Total:	1240	5503,45

III. Evaluation of the scientific works of the candidate for the overall academic development

✓ General characteristics of scientific production and publication activity

Materials submitted by the candidate demonstrate working in an interdisciplinary environment and good collaboration with colleagues from different medical specialties and units. The analysis of the presented documents shows that:

Prof. Karalilova participated in the competition with:

- Author's abstract of a dissertation work for ONS "Doctor";
- Author's abstract of a dissertation work for the "Doctor of Sciences" National Assembly;
- Habilitation thesis - monograph;
- 24 full-text publications in refereed journals in Scopus and/or Web of Science, incl. 20 with IF;
- 7 articles in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals;
- Contribution to two university textbooks (in press).

Prof. Karalilova has presented evidentiary material according to previous procedures for ESD "Doctor", SD "Doctor of Sciences"; AP "Docent".

✓ **Scientific activity - dissemination and application of the candidate's scientific and practical achievements among the scientific community**

The scientific contributions of Prof. Karalilova presented in the reference cover a variety of scientific issues, focused on current and significant aspects in general medical practice and rheumatology, and fully correspond to the specifics of the announced competition. Scientific contributions reflect original, confirmatory and applied aspects, with a significant part of the results published in a number of prestigious journals indexed in world-renowned databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, including with Impact Factor (IF) indexed in Clarivate Analytics.

The main specialized scientific areas of development and research activity are focused on the following areas: musculoskeletal ultrasonography, biomarkers in rheumatology, lung ultrasound, elastography, rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis, as well as various multidisciplinary areas of medical practice such as COVID-19, diabetic arthropathy, carotid ultrasound in patients with rheumatic diseases, etc.

✓ **Participation in the implementation and management of projects**

Assoc. Prof. Karalilova participated in the competition with 8 international scientific or educational projects, one of which she is the head of. The importance of each of them should also be assessed. Given my scientific interests, I find it extremely valuable the Bulgarian participation in the management of the large international project "Building an open European Network on OsteoArthritis research" in the person of Assoc. Prof. Karalilova. The project aims to create a European Osteoarthritis Society (ESOA) to coordinate and stimulate more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research, technological development and translation of the results in the clinic aimed at improving the quality of life of those affected by osteoarthritis in Europe. She is a member of the groups OMERACT (Outcome Measures in Rheumatology), TUI (Targeted Ultrasound Initiative), EUSTAR - an international research network for scleroderma, operating under the auspices of the World Scleroderma Foundation and the European Alliance of Rheumatology Associations EULAR.

✓ **Scientific and creative achievements (scientific authority)**

Since January 2024, she has been the Deputy Dean for Academic Activities at the Medical Faculty of the Medical University - Plovdiv. Until now, she is the supervisor of 7 doctoral students and 3 rheumatology fellows. She is proficient in instrumental methods - ultrasonography, capillaroscopy. He went through a number of international courses in musculoskeletal ultrasound (Graz, Rome, Madrid, Leeds) and holds an EULAR qualification for Ultrasound Trainers in Rheumatology, and since 2017 she has been a certified European instructor in musculoskeletal ultrasound. She is a member of the Bulgarian Rheumatology Society, the Board of Directors of the Bulgarian Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Association (BAMSU), and since 2023 she is its President. She is a member of the Faculty Council of the Ministry of Health at the Medical University - Plovdiv.

✓ **Guidance of PhD students**

From the submitted documents, Assoc. Prof. Karalilova has been the supervisor of 7 doctoral students up to this point, two of whom have successfully defended their thesis. In this way, Associate Professor Karalilova meets the requirements according to the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of MU-Plovdiv. Three specialists are supervised by the practical training associate professor Rositsa Karalilova.

IV. Evaluation of the monographic work

In the competition for JSC "Professor" Prof. Karalilova presents a monograph on the topic "Ultrasonographic phenotypes in osteoarthritis" with a volume of 140 pages, incl. The applications. The monographic work includes 5 main chapters, 56 figures and 25 appendices. The monograph has been peer-reviewed by two qualified persons

The monograph is suitable for the preparation of doctors with interests in physical and rehabilitation medicine, rheumatology, sports medicine and orthopedics. This monograph is in line with the achievements of medical science and presents a modern approach in the diagnosis and treatment of degenerative joint diseases. The problem with the treatment of osteoarthritis is extremely relevant, due to the fact that, despite the availability of a significant number of drugs, there is still no pharmacological agent approved with an indication - modifying the progression of the disease. This lack of baseline means to arrest degeneration in hyaline cartilage makes phenotyping and stratification of patients an important step toward designing proper protocols for future clinical trials.

Proving the disease-modifying effect of new agents and methods with established symptomatic efficacy is one of the main directions in the study of musculoskeletal diseases. Data from the own study on the application of ultrasound in osteoarthritis is a contribution to medical science. In the available literature, there are still debates about how to phenotype OA, which is why the monograph with its conclusions is a pioneering work.

Critical Notes: While the bibliography is impressive and up-to-date, I consider it necessary to include all literary sources in the text in the chronological order of their introduction (Vancouver style). Although the term osteoarthritis is used in the Anglo-Saxon scientific literature, traditionally in most European rheumatology and orthopedic schools, the term osteoarthritis or arthrosis has been used.

V. Reflection (citation) of the candidate's publications in the national and foreign literature

The evidentiary material provided by Associate Professor Professor Karalilova certifies a significant number of citations in renowned journals. The scientific works have been cited a total of 184 times in refereed and indexed Scopus or WoS Journals after exclusion of citations by all previous procedures under ESD "Doctor", SD "Doctor of

Sciences" and AP "Associate Professor". One citation in monographic work and 7 citations in non-refereed publications were presented for the position.

The references provided by Prof. Karalilova testify to H-index 9 in Scopus, and a reference made in the referenced database Web of Science shows H-index 8. I believe that the presented citations and references testify to the high publication image of the candidate and meet the requirements of the Regulations for development of the academic staff of Medical University - Plovdiv and the relevant Law.

VI. Complex, qualitative evaluation of the teaching-methodical and teaching activities

Prof. Karalilova has been the supervisor of 7 doctoral students so far, and two of them have successfully defended their dissertations under her supervision. These doctoral students have published a significant number of scientific articles in prestigious international journals, which is a testimony to the high level of research work carried out under the leadership of Assoc. Prof. Karalilova. The remaining PhD students are at an advanced stage of their research and are showing promising results, thanks to the competent and dedicated mentorship of their supervisor.

In addition, Associate Professor Dr. Rositsa Karalilova is actively engaged in the training of three specialists, providing high-quality practical training and sharing her extensive experience in the field. Under her guidance, the interns develop the necessary practical skills and knowledge that allow them to establish themselves as competent and confident professionals in their field. Prof. Karalilova demonstrates exceptional pedagogical skills and the ability to motivate and inspire her students, which contributes to their successful professional development. This is evidenced by the report from teaching activities in the last two years. The training load of interns, specialists and doctoral students equals 555.5 study hours, while its study load in the form of lectures and exercises - 1035 study hours.

Her active role in training a new generation of scientists and specialists underlines her dedication to the academic community and her contribution to the development of scientific potential in the relevant field.

VII. Critical notes and recommendations

In the further activity of the candidate, I would recommend to keep in mind the following:

- to share with a larger audience her scientific works, including the residency work presented in the form of a monograph;
- to expand its collaboration with research teams in the country.
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VIII. An overall assessment of the applicant's suitability

With this opinion, I give a POSITIVE assessment to Assoc. Prof. Rositsa Karalilova, PhD, in relation to the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3, respectively, to the requirements under Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Law on the development of the academic staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the requirements specific to MU - Plovdiv in terms of areas for units with clinical activity, defined in the Regulations for Academic Development at the Medical University - Plovdiv.

IX. Conclusion

Based on the extensive analysis of the candidate's teaching, development and research activities, I believe that Assoc. Prof. Rositsa Karalilova, PhD, meets and even exceeds the mandatory and specific conditions and scientometric criteria - for the academic position "PROFESSOR" in the field of higher education 7 Health care and sports, professional direction 7.1. Medicine, specialty "Rheumatology" in accordance with the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of the Medical University - Plovdiv and the Law on the development of the academic staff of the Republic of Bulgaria.

30 August 2024
Varna

Reviewer:.....
/Assoc. Prof. Tsvetoslav Georgiev, PhD/

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