

To the Chairman of the Scientific Jury,
determined by Order № P - 3669/ 22.07.2025
of the Deputy Rector of the Medical University Plovdiv
15A Vasil Aprilov Blvd, 4002 Plovdiv

Based on your Protocol № 1 from 29/07/2025

Attached I present: REVIEW

on a competition for the academic position of "**PROFESSOR**"
in the scientific specialty HYGIENE in the Field of Higher education 7. Healthcare and
sport, Professional field 7.1. Medicine for teaching in Bulgarian and English, with a
mandatory requirement for candidates to hold a specialty in "Nutrition and Dietetics"
announced for the needs of Medical University Plovdiv, Department of Hygiene
in State Gazette issue 41/20.05.2025

Reviewer: Professor Magdalena Stefanova Platikanova-Ivanova, MD, PhD
Scientific specialty: Hygiene
Institution: Thracian University of Stara Zagora

Address for
E-mail: mpl
Phone: 089

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Stara Zagora, 11 Armeiska Str
magdalena.platikanova@trakia-uni.bg

REVIEW

by

PROFESSOR MAGDALENA STEFANOVA PLATIKANOVA-IVANOVA, MD, PHD

Vice-Dean of Faculty of Medicine, Thracian University of Stara Zagora
Head of the Department of Hygiene, epidemiology, microbiology, parasitology and
infectious diseases, Faculty of Medicine,
Thracian University of Stara Zagora

By Order of the Rector of the Medical University – Plovdiv, No. R-3669/22.07.2025, and pursuant to an approved proposal by the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv (Protocol No. 5 of 30.06.2025), I have been appointed to prepare a review for the announced competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty Hygiene at the Medical University – Plovdiv, for the needs of the Department of Hygiene, MU – Plovdiv.

The review has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedures for Acquisition of Academic Degrees and Holding of Academic Positions at the Medical University – Plovdiv.

One candidate has submitted documents and has been admitted to participate in the competition for the academic position of "Professor" in Hygiene – **Assoc. Prof. Stanislava Nikolaeva Harizanova, MD, PhD** – Vice-Dean for Academic Activities and Head of the Department of Hygiene, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv.

I. ANALYSIS OF THE CANDIDATE'S CAREER PROFILE

Assoc. Prof. Stanislava Harizanova completed her secondary education at the French Language High School "Antoine de Saint-Exupéry" in Plovdiv in 1998. She is a graduate of the Medical University – Plovdiv, holding a Master's degree in Medicine. She began her professional career as an Assistant at the Department of Hygiene, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv in 2008. Her academic development follows the traditional academic path: Assistant (2008–2014); Chief Assistant (2014–2018). Since 2014, she has held the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the scientific specialty of Hygiene, having successfully defended her dissertation on the topic: " Burnout syndrome among employees working in correctional institutions." In 2018, she was appointed as Associate Professor at the Department of Hygiene, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv.

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova demonstrates an impressive commitment to professional growth and development. This is evidenced by her participation in numerous specialized qualification courses with both theoretical and practical focus, and by the acquisition of three medical specialties: Occupational Medicine (2016), General Hygiene (2019), and

Nutrition and Dietetics (2023). All of this has been accomplished alongside a high and diverse academic workload, including practical sessions and lectures, preparation and updating of curricula in various disciplines, training of medical residents and PhD students, among others.

Her high level of competence and broad range of scientific interests have made Assoc. Prof. Harizanova a sought-after collaborator in numerous projects, commissions, and professional organizations. Her organizational skills and socially engaged activity are further reflected in her memberships in the Bulgarian Medical Association, the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, the European Public Health Association, the Bulgarian Association of Public Health, the Bulgarian Scientific Society for Public Health, and the Bulgarian Society of Nutrition and Dietetics. A testament to her professional recognition is her appointment as a member of the editorial board of the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Journal of Health and Environmental Research*.

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova is a recognized and erudite professional with extensive administrative and expert experience in the field of public health. Her expertise is further evidenced by a professional opinion she provided to an official institution—the Mayor of the Municipality of Rodopi—regarding the impact of a mobile communication emitting device. Her organizational skills are demonstrated by her appointments as: Head of the Department of Hygiene, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv (since 2020); Vice-Dean for Academic Activities at the Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Plovdiv (since 2022 to present); member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Public Health; member of the Academic Council of the Medical University – Plovdiv; representative of the university in the process of updating the National Competency Framework for the specialty "Nursing"; contributor to the development of a Strategy for the Development of Healthcare Professions in the section concerning the profession "Physician Assistant"; and participant in the optimization of procedures and conditions for acquiring medical specialties within the healthcare system. Her team-working abilities and integrity in professional relationships have earned her respect and recognition from colleagues, students, and academic staff. Her creativity represents an undeniable potential for her continued professional development.

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova has command of French, English, and Spanish, which she uses fluently in both written and spoken professional contexts.

II. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBMITTED MATERIALS FOR THE COMPETITION

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova has submitted a detailed, appropriately formatted, and logically structured set of documents certifying her professional qualifications and scientific development, in accordance with the requirements for holding the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty Hygiene, field of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.1. Medicine, as stipulated in the Higher Education Act and the

Regulations on the Structure and Activities of the Medical University – Plovdiv. The descriptions of the documents are accurate, precise, and informative, which facilitates their review and analysis without any difficulties.

III. ASSESSMENT OF THE CANDIDATE'S SCIENTIFIC WORK FOR THE OVERALL ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. General characteristics of the scientific production and publication activity

For the purposes of the competition, Assoc. Prof. Harizanova, PhD, has submitted a list of 56 scientific works, including: 1 extended abstract (author's summary), 1 book, 1 monograph, 3 textbooks, 5 teaching aids, and 45 full-text publications. Among these, 21 publications are in scientific journals indexed and referenced in international scientific databases (Scopus and/or Web of Science), of which 11 are in journals with an Impact Factor (total IF = 22.382); 24 publications have been published in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals or edited collective volumes. The candidate also provides supporting documentation for participation with conference papers in 41 scientific forums (24 international and 17 national).

The submitted scientific publications and conference papers are written in academic style, employing precise and clear terminology, and are properly and accessibly illustrated. Their focus and thematic direction testify to the fact that Assoc. Prof. Harizanova, PhD, demonstrates the required level of scientific and publishing activity.

2. Scientific activity – dissemination and application of the candidate's scientific and practical achievement among the scientific community

In the research activity of Assoc. Prof. Harizanova, PhD, the areas of interest and scientific achievements are clearly defined, both within the scope of the competition's subject area and in terms of multidisciplinary integration with other fields in healthcare and medical education. Among the contributions from her scientific work, particular emphasis is placed on those in the field of nutrition and dietetics. Within the limits of my expertise, I accept the contributions of the scientific works in the main thematic areas as presented by the candidate in the competition:

First Thematic Area: Nutrition

This area focuses on several key directions. The candidate has studied the dietary habits and health status of young people, particularly medical students at the Medical University – Plovdiv and has provided specific recommendations to university institutions aimed at raising awareness about healthy eating and integrating programs to promote healthier dietary habits among both Bulgarian and international students. A significant correlation was found between dietary patterns and body mass index (BMI) among medical students. The effects of shift work on body composition, eating behavior, and

associated health risks have been examined in individuals employed in the machine-building industry.

Additionally, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on changes in dietary behavior has been explored. The candidate outlines future perspectives in nutrigenetics and nutrigenomics in obesity management, emphasizing the importance of a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which nutrients influence gene expression and their role in the prevention and treatment of metabolic disorders.

Special attention is given to publications related to the understanding of personalized nutrition and its role in preventing metabolic syndrome, as well as to the proposed specific directions for future research and practical application in clinical practice.

Second Thematic Area: Occupational Stress and Burnout

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova explores issues related to the prevalence and manifestation of distress and academic burnout among international medical students studying in English. Various coping strategies are proposed, including the improvement of online education, the provision of psychosocial support through counseling and peer support groups, and the implementation of stress management and emotional resilience training programs.

In a number of publications, Assoc. Prof. Harizanova develops the thesis on stress resilience and conflict management in the work environment of public health inspectors, offering strategies for managing occupational stress. She identifies the professional specifics that lead to differences in burnout manifestations among nurses and prison officers. She also examines the main difficulties faced by newly employed nurses in healthcare institutions, focusing on the professional, social, and psychological aspects of the adaptation process. The importance of professional training and mentorship is emphasized as a key factor in the successful integration of newly recruited nurses.

No less important is the issue of digital stress among IT specialists and its impact on mental and physical health, including increased levels of anxiety, fatigue, depression, reduced concentration, and social isolation. The candidate highlights the critical role of employers and organizational policies in creating work environments that reduce digital stress.

Her research also includes applied studies on the prevalence and intensity of burnout syndrome among general practitioners in Bulgaria during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as their satisfaction with work-life balance. The findings outline key directions for health policy and practices to support general practitioners during health crises. Notably, the COVID-19 Peritraumatic Distress Index questionnaire was validated for the Bulgarian population, making it a widely applicable tool for research into

peritraumatic distress reactions related to behavior, emotions, thoughts, and symptoms of stress during or immediately following a traumatic event. The Bulgarian version demonstrated high reliability and cross-cultural validity, providing excellent opportunities for measuring psychological distress in emergency pandemic situations across various age groups.

Third Thematic Area: Risk Management of Biological Agents and Ensuring Worker Safety at Wastewater Treatment Plants During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The publications in this area address issues related to the management of risks associated with exposure to biological agents among workers at wastewater treatment plants during the COVID-19 pandemic. An important contribution lies in emphasizing the need for worker training regarding occupational risks in treatment facilities, as well as the importance of personal protective measures and hygiene practices. Raising awareness about potential hazards is essential for reducing incidents and ensuring worker safety, especially during pandemics and other public health emergencies.

Fourth Thematic Area: Legal Protection and Challenges in Safeguarding Workers with Mental Health Conditions in Bulgaria

The existing legislation in Bulgaria regulating the rights of workers with mental disorders has been thoroughly analyzed. The scientific publications present concrete recommendations for improving the legal protection of employees with mental health conditions. These include the introduction of specialized mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the status of such workers, as well as enhancing efforts to integrate mental health issues into programs for ensuring healthy and safe working conditions.

Fifth Thematic Area: Risk Management Related to Exposure to Antineoplastic Agents Among Pharmacists

The primary risk factors associated with pharmacists' work involving antineoplastic agents have been identified, including inhalation of vapors, skin contact, or accidental ingestion. The publications propose and discuss preventive measures, such as the use of personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves and masks), the implementation of strict safety procedures for the storage and handling of these medications, and the recommendation of training programs aimed at increasing pharmacists' awareness of the associated risks and strategies for their mitigation.

Sixth Thematic Area: Monitoring of Health Risks Related to Body Modifications (Tattoos, Permanent Makeup, and Piercing)

At present, there is a lack of scientifically based information at the national level regarding the potential risks associated with body modifications such as tattoos and permanent makeup – practices that often carry emotional, psychological, and social significance. The main health threats resulting from tattooing have been identified and

classified, with emphasis on risk factors, consequences for physical and mental health, and the need for prevention. The publications recommend the introduction of requirements for professional competence among individuals performing such procedures, as well as the implementation of strict control over the composition and origin of inks, and compliance with hygiene standards to ensure optimal health safety for the population.

Seventh Thematic Area: 3D Bioprinting

The integration of 3D printing technologies into the pharmaceutical industry expands the potential for the development of innovative, cost-effective, sustainable, personalized, and multi-layered drug delivery platforms for the treatment of oncological, neurological, and rare diseases. The benefits of creating tissues and cells that pharmaceutical companies and researchers can use to test new drugs have been highlighted. This revolutionary advancement is expected to significantly contribute to the progress of personalized therapy.

Eighth Thematic Area: Legalization of Surrogacy

The scientific interests and contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harizanova have expanded to include a study summarizing the attitudes of various demographic and social groups toward the potential legalization of surrogacy. Based on the results, recommendations have been proposed to legislators and relevant stakeholders for the ethical, social, and legally responsible regulation of this issue within the Bulgarian context.

Ninth Thematic Area: Student Training. Innovative Technologies Supporting Students

With the aim of preventing risks and improving the psychophysical and emotional well-being of students during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, practical training has been conducted for Bulgarian and Macedonian students. This training focused on developing skills for providing psychological support and communication techniques for engaging with students in distress (through in-person or online courses) and included practical guidance on prevention and (self-)regulation to foster personal resilience to stress and the development of adaptive capacities.

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova skillfully applies the results of her scientific research, inventions, and other intellectual property products in practice, participating in the development of:

- ✓ Software for the prevention and diagnosis of burnout syndrome based on the methodology of V. Boyko, available freely online at: <https://mu-burnout.com/>;
- ✓ A web-based platform "STOP COVID-19 STRESS" for assessing stress-induced conditions such as prediabetes, metabolic syndrome, and psychological distress among students during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for risk prevention: [https://stopcovidstress.mu-plovdiv.bg](https://stopcovidstress.mu-plovdiv.bg;);

- ✓ Authorial health promotion programs, developed and disseminated to improve healthy lifestyle habits among children and adolescents.

The contributions from the scientific works of Assoc. Prof. Harizanova are of theoretical, methodological, confirmatory, and applied scientific character. They are also of importance for the continuous improvement of education in the field of hygiene-related academic disciplines. Her scientific articles are original, they discuss statistically significant data, make use of recent literature sources, and the published results are both representative and convincing.

3. Participation in the implementation and management of projects

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova has submitted documents certifying her participation in two research projects — one intra-university project, in which she serves as lead researcher, and one international project, where she acts as project coordinator. She is also involved as an academic mentor for student internships under the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development".

4. Scientific and creative achievements (Scientific recognition and authority)

An expression of the professionalism and competence of Assoc. Prof. Harizanova is her appointment as chair/member of 18 scientific juries under the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA). The candidate has served as a member of the organizational and scientific committees of three academic conferences, acting as chairperson in one of them. She has also served as a reviewer of three monographs and editor of one teaching aid. Her scientific contributions have been recognized with two awards – "Certificate for the Best Presentation" in the scientific session "Public Health", for papers presented at the Union of Scientists in Plovdiv Forum in 2024.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE MONOGRAPHIC WORK

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova is the author of the monograph "Academic Burnout Among Medical Students – Assessment and Prevention Approaches", FastPrintBooks, Plovdiv (2025).

The monograph comprises 167 pages, structured into four chapters, and is illustrated with tables and figures, accompanied by a bibliography of 282 Bulgarian and international sources. The work provides a detailed exploration of a current and significant issue—academic burnout—examined in the context of English-speaking international medical students at the Medical University – Plovdiv.

The value of the monograph lies in its use of original research data, which contributes to a critical understanding of the risk factors and provides practical guidelines for intervention in cases of academic burnout. The work emphasizes the need for the development of sustainable academic and psychosocial support systems, the

implementation of flexible educational models, and the enhancement of emotional intelligence and stress management skills during the course of medical education

V. REFLECTION OF THE CANDIDATE'S PUBLICATIONS IN NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LITERATURE

Recognition of Assoc. Prof. Harizanova's scientific work within the academic community is evidenced by her citation record, which includes: 63 citations in scientific journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science, across 13 articles; 7 citations in peer-reviewed monographs and edited volumes, across 3 articles; 45 citations in non-indexed peer-reviewed journals, across 13 articles. Her scholarly contributions are clearly recognized and accessible to the scientific community working in the fields of hygiene and public health, as further evidenced by citations of her articles in 56 foreign doctoral dissertations, of which 23 are indexed in international scientific databases.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE, QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The academic report on teaching workload demonstrates a level of engagement that significantly exceeds the requirements set by the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the Medical University – Plovdiv. Over the past three years, Assoc. Prof. Harizanova has had an annual in-class workload ranging from 1772 to 2839.3 hours, and an extracurricular workload of 250 to 320 hours. She actively participates in the education of students in the programs of Medicine, Dental Medicine, and Pharmacy, in both Bulgarian and English, as well as in the training of medical interns. Additionally, she teaches students in the following degree programs: Public Health and Health Management (Bachelor's and Master's level), Public Health Inspector, and Pharmaceutical Business Management.

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova has contributed to the development of three university textbooks, one of which is in English, as well as five university teaching aids, including one in English, intended for students in Medicine, Dental Medicine, and Pharmacy. She has served as scientific supervisor for two PhD students, both of whom have successfully defended their dissertations — one in the doctoral program in Hygiene, and the other in the doctoral program in Health Care Management. She conducts annual English-language training for students under the Erasmus+ program, serves as advisor of the English-language Hygiene student club, and is course coordinator for the pre-graduation internship in Hygiene for sixth-year medical students, both Bulgarian- and English-speaking, ensuring access to real-life practical environments. As a result of her active collaboration with students and PhD candidates, 12 scientific publications have been produced and presented at scientific forums and published in prestigious journals.

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova is a member of state examination boards for the acquisition of the medical specialties Occupational Medicine and General Hygiene, and serves as

chair and member of examination committees for colloquia with medical residents in the specialties General Hygiene, Nutrition and Dietetics, Occupational Medicine, Community Hygiene, and Consultant in breastfeeding, healthy, and dietary nutrition. She is also chair of state examination boards for the specialties Medicine and Public Health Inspector. She has taken an active role in the development of curricula for several disciplines taught within the department.

The above highlights the solid theoretical and scientific foundation of Assoc. Prof. Harizanova, which enables her to excel in both research and academic teaching.

VII. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CANDIDATE'S COMPLIANCE WITH MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR ACQUISITION OF THE ACADEMIC POSITION "PROFESSOR"

Assoc. Prof. Harizanova, PhD, has submitted all required documents in accordance with the provisions of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), its Implementation Rules, the national minimum requirements, as well as the additional requirements set forth in the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the Medical University – Plovdiv. The scientific works have been arranged according to the prescribed format, demonstrating compliance with both minimum and additional requirements (Self-assessment Table 8.1). The accompanying documentation confirms that the submitted works fully meet and significantly exceed the additional scientometric criteria established in the Regulations for the academic field 7.1. Medicine at the Medical University – Plovdiv.

Total Points of Assoc. Prof. S. Harizanova MD, PhD, according to the minimum national and additional requirements for scientific and teaching activity for acquisition of the academic position of "Professor" at the Medical University – Plovdiv

Group	Indicators	Изискуеми точки „Професор“	Точки на кандидата
A	Indicator 1	50	50
Б	Indicator 2	-	-
В	Indicator 3 или 4	100	100
Г	Total Score for Indicators 5 to 9	300	593.7
Д	Total Score for Indicators 10 to 12	400	1300
Е	Total Score for Indicators 13 to 22	150	392.4
Ж	Teaching activity	500	2984
TOTAL		1500	5420.1

VIII. CRITICAL REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have no critical remarks regarding the candidate for the academic position of Professor. Assoc. Prof. Harizanova is a specialist, scholar, and university lecturer who demonstrates constructive creative development, strong organizational skills, and a high capacity for work. I have had the opportunity to observe her consistent and purposeful professional growth as a responsible and conscientious educator and researcher. She is dedicated, inspiring, and both the driving force and executor of ideas in the fields of scientific research and academic teaching. She possesses enormous potential for further development and advancement, contributing not only to the Department of Hygiene but also to the Medical University – Plovdiv as a whole.

All of the above gives me reason to unreservedly describe the professional trajectory of Assoc. Prof. Harizanova as a "spiral of upward development."

I sincerely wish her continued success in her scientific and educational endeavors, with the same level of enthusiasm and precision.

IX. CONCLUSION

Based on the above, I can conclude that the research and teaching activities of Assoc. Prof. Stanislava Nikolaeva Harizanova MD, PhD, define her as a highly qualified specialist and professional in the field of Hygiene, as well as an excellent, responsible, and respected academic teacher.

The analysis of the submitted documentation regarding her career development, teaching activity, research and publication output, scientific and creative achievements, as well as the fulfillment of specific requirements and scientometric indicators, gives me full confidence to express **a completely positive assessment of her candidacy in the current procedure.**

I therefore confidently vote in favor of awarding the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty Hygiene, professional field 7.1. Medicine, area of higher education 7. Healthcare and Sports, to **ASSOC. PROF. STANISLAVA NIKOLAEVA HARIZANOVA MD, PHD**, for the needs of the Department of Hygiene at the Medical University – Plovdiv.

05/08/2025
Stara Zagora

Reviewer: 
(Profesor M. Platikanova-Ivanova, MD, PhD)

Заличено на основание
Чл.5 §1, 6, "Б" Регламент (ЕС)2016/679