

STATEMENT

by

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Internal Member of the Scientific Jury according to Order No. R 115/09.01.2026 for the official procedure for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy" (PhD).

Professional field: 7.4. "Public Health"

Scientific Specialty: "Health Care Management"

PhD student: Nedyalka Grozeva Boycheva

Form of doctoral studies: Independent PhD student at the Department of Health Care Management, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Plovdiv

Topic: "Formation of Health Skills and Habits in Children from the Roma Community"

Supervisors: Prof. Maria Semerdzhieva, MD, PhD and Prof. Bianka Tornyova, PhD

General presentation of the procedure

The presented set of materials, available in both electronic and hard copy formats, is in full compliance with the requirements for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy" (PhD), as stipulated by the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for its implementation, and the internal Regulations of the Medical University of Plovdiv.

Brief biographical data

Assistant Professor Nedyalka Boycheva completed her semi-higher education with a qualification in "General Nursing" at the Medical College of the Higher Medical Institute of Plovdiv in 1997. In pursuit of higher professional training, she consecutively completed degrees in "Health Care Management" (Bachelor's degree) in 2000, "Public Health and Health Management" (Master's degree) in 2004, and "Health Care Management" (Master's degree) in 2017. She holds two postgraduate specialties: "Medical Pedagogy" (2019) and "Public Health" (2024).

Her professional career in healthcare began in 1997 as a nurse in the surgical department of the First Municipal Hospital in Plovdiv. From 1999 to 2007, she worked as a nurse in the second surgical department of Hospital "Plovdiv", and from 2007 to 2010, she served in the clinic of gastroenterology and hepatology at University hospital "St. George".

Over the years, N. Boycheva has established herself as a health specialist with excellent professional qualities, for which she was awarded 2nd place for "Nurse of the Year in Bulgaria" by the Bulgarian Association of Health Care Professionals in 2006.

Since 2008, she has been professionally engaged in active teaching, scientific, and administrative activities as a part-time lecturer and assistant professor at the Department of Nursing Care at the Medical College and the Medical University of Plovdiv. Asst. Prof. Boycheva is responsible for the international activities of the department and serves as the official representative of the Medical University of Plovdiv in the European Nursing Module (ENM). The combination of clinical experience and pedagogical training allows her to successfully balance direct commitment to patients and students with management and educational functions within the healthcare system.

She is a member of the Bulgarian Association of Health Care Professionals, the Bulgarian Scientific Society of Public Health, the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Public Health Association, and the European Public Health Association.

She is proficient in Russian and English.

Relevance and significance of the topic

The formation of health skills and habits among children from the Roma community holds a central place in contemporary strategies for public health and social integration. The relevance of the topic is determined by the fact that the preservation of children's health is not only a personal asset but also a fundamental indicator of a country's social well-being. In the context of demographic changes in Bulgaria, ensuring an adequate health culture among the Roma population, which represents a significant portion of the younger generation, is a strategic task of long-term importance.

The significance of the topic stems from the existing inequalities in healthcare. Literature data and statistical studies continue to report lower health awareness and a higher incidence of socially significant diseases within segregated Roma communities. The reasons for this are complex: ranging from poor living conditions and economic

deficits to cultural specificities and language barriers. Therefore, focusing attention on children is the most effective mechanism, given the fact that early childhood is the period when the foundations of hygienic habits and nutritional behavior are laid.

Content and structure of the dissertation

The presented dissertation consists of 186 pages and is illustrated with 48 figures, 25 tables, 1 scheme, and 6 appendices. The bibliography includes 186 literary sources, of which 122 are in cyrillic and 64 in latin script.

The introduction emphasizes the relevance of the topic and its significance from both scientific and applied perspectives. Assistant Professor Boycheva demonstrates a high level of expertise regarding the researched issues, based on an extensive literature review of specialized scientific sources.

The aim of the dissertation is formulated clearly and corresponds precisely to the problem under investigation. The tasks as presented allow for the maximum fulfillment of the stated objective. The selection of study participants is a prerequisite for the excellent execution of the assigned tasks.

Regarding methodology, she has combined various empirical methods and data collection techniques adequate for the objectives and tasks at hand. This serves as evidence of her profound theoretical knowledge and practical skills in their application for the analysis and evaluation of the addressed issues.

The research and analysis of the results are based on objective and accurate information gathered from primary sources: roma and bulgarian families; medical specialists and educators working predominantly with children from roma origin.

A proprietary survey was conducted on the following aspects:

- Key factors influencing the health of roma children in the age range of 0–7 years, as well as the level of formation of health skills and habits in early childhood;
- The opinion of educators working with roma children regarding the specifics, challenges, and difficulties in building health skills and habits in a multicultural environment;
- The opinion of medical specialists regarding the peculiarities and problems associated with the formation of health habits in children of roma origin.

An undisputed contribution of the dissertation is the author's conceptual model for a plan for the formation of health skills and habits in children from the roma community (ages 0–7 years).

Assistant Professor Boycheva demonstrates very good awareness of the research on this problem on a global scale and the authors who have worked in this field. The analyzed results reinforce the need for the introduction of systematic and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the action plan, which is a key factor for the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives aimed at building healthy habits in children from the Roma community. The profound and reasoned conclusions drawn from the study and analysis of the researched problems are impressive. The specific recommendations and proposals made will contribute significantly to the creation of a joint system for monitoring, analysis, and correction to achieve sustainable impact and long-term change in the attitudes and behavior of this ethnic group.

The abstract of the dissertation is prepared in accordance with the requirements and objectively reflects the results of the research. In connection with the dissertation, one participation in an international conference and 3 full-text scientific publications have been submitted, in which Nedyalka Boycheva is the lead or sole author.

Conclusion

The dissertation of Assistant Professor Nedyalka Boycheva is characterized by a high level of professionalism regarding the conducted scientific research. The in-depth analysis of the results and the derived scientific and practical contributions are evidence of her exceptional knowledge of the subject matter.

The presented materials and results of the dissertation meet all the requirements of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for its implementation, and the Regulations of the Medical University of Plovdiv.

The dissertation demonstrates that Assistant Professor Nedyalka Grozeva Boycheva possesses profound theoretical knowledge and research skills in the scientific specialty "Health Care Management".

Given the merits of the presented dissertation, I provide my positive assessment of the conducted research, the abstract, the results obtained, and the contributions made. I

propose to the honorable members of the Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy" (PhD) to Nedyalka Grozeva Boycheva in the professional field 7.4. Public Health, higher education area 7. Healthcare and Sports.

January 19, 2026
Plovdiv

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

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(Prof. Desislava Bakova, PhD)