

To

The Chair of the Scientific Jury,

appointed by Order No. R-4181/16.07.2026 of the Rector of Medical University – Plovdiv

Dear Madam Chair of the Scientific Jury,

I hereby submit a Statement concerning the competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sports Training (including Methodology of Therapeutic Physical Training)", in higher education area 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4. Public Health, for a full-time position at the Department of Rehabilitation and Preventive Health Care, Medical College, Medical University - Plovdiv, announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 44 of 14.05.2026.

Statement prepared by: Prof. Maria Krasteva Bozhkova, PhD

Scientific specialty: "Social Medicine and Organization of Healthcare and Pharmacy"

Institution: Medical University - Plovdiv, Medical College - Plovdiv

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

STATEMENT

by Prof. Maria Krasteva Bozhkova, PhD

Medical University - Plovdiv, Medical College

Internal Member of the Scientific Jury

Subject: Competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sports Training (including Methodology of Therapeutic Physical Training)", in higher education area 7. Healthcare and Sports, professional field 7.4. Public Health, for a full-time position at the Department of Rehabilitation and Preventive Health Care, Medical College, Medical University - Plovdiv, announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 44 of 14.05.2026.

One candidate is participating in the announced competition for the academic position of "Professor" - **Assoc. Prof. Maria Stamova Vakrilova Becheva, PhD.**

This Statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Sections III / IV of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law, governing the conditions and procedure for occupying the academic position of "Professor" at Medical University - Plovdiv.

I. ANALYSIS OF THE CANDIDATE'S CAREER PROFILE

Assoc. Prof. Maria Stamova Vakrilova Becheva, PhD, is an established university lecturer, researcher and academic administrator with many years of professional and managerial experience in medical education and healthcare.

The submitted curriculum vitae shows that her professional career has been closely associated with the development of rehabilitation, kinesitherapy, public health and the education of medical professionals.

The candidate graduated from the Semi-Higher Medical Institute in Plovdiv in 1992 with a semi-higher education qualification as a rehabilitator. In 2006, she completed a Bachelor's degree in

Kinesitherapy at the Vasil Levski National Sports Academy in Sofia, Faculty of Public Health, Health Care and Tourism. In 2007, she obtained a Master's degree in Kinesitherapy from the same faculty of the Vasil Levski National Sports Academy in Sofia.

In 2012, she obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) at the Vasil Levski National Sports Academy in Sofia, Faculty of Public Health, Health Care and Tourism, in the scientific specialty "Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sports Training (including Methodology of Therapeutic Physical Training)". In 2018, she was appointed to the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Medical College of Medical University - Plovdiv.

Her professional development has successively encompassed clinical, teaching, administrative and managerial activities. She worked as a rehabilitator and subsequently developed a long-standing teaching career at the Medical College of Medical University - Plovdiv. She has held the positions of Senior Lecturer and Head of Department at the Medical College - Plovdiv. This consistency in her academic development is indicative of professional stability, organizational capacity and a high degree of commitment to the development of medical education.

The candidate's broad range of competences is particularly noteworthy and includes participation in the development of curricula, preparation of documentation for accreditation procedures, management and coordination of the educational process, development of textbooks and teaching materials, as well as extensive teaching experience in the education of students in the "Rehabilitator" programme.

The candidate demonstrates a sustained presence in the academic environment and consistent development in research, teaching and organizational activities.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MATERIALS SUBMITTED BY THE CANDIDATE FOR THE COMPETITION

The competition documentation submitted by **Assoc. Prof. Maria Stamova Vakrilova Becheva, PhD**, complies with the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Regulations for its Implementation and the internal requirements of Medical University - Plovdiv.

The submitted materials are duly prepared, systematically organized and accompanied by the necessary supporting evidence. The documentation enables a comprehensive assessment of the candidate's research, teaching and organizational activities.

III. ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY

General characteristics of the research output and publication activity

The research output of **Assoc. Prof. Maria Stamova Vakrilova Becheva, PhD**, is characterized by thematic consistency, an interdisciplinary nature and a pronounced practical orientation. The submitted scientific works outline a sustained academic profile in the fields of medical education, physical medicine, kinesitherapy and clinical pathology.

The submitted materials include 53 full-text publications produced after the candidate obtained the academic position of "Associate Professor". There are 34 publications in refereed and indexed journals covered by Scopus and Web of Science, of which 23 have an Impact Factor (IF) and are indexed in Clarivate Analytics (Thomson Reuters), while 11 publications have a SCImago Journal Rank (SJR). The total IF is 27.83 and the total SJR is 1.664. One habilitation work is presented in the form of a monograph entitled "Sport and Health". One published book is based on the defended dissertation and is entitled "A Kinesitherapeutic Approach to Chronic Low Back Pain". There are 19 publications in non-refereed journals, 3 published university textbooks and 2 published teaching manuals. The submitted citation data indicate good visibility of the research output in national and international scientific literature. The candidate's publication activity demonstrates sustained development, academic consistency and a clearly defined research profile.

Research activity - dissemination and application of the candidate's scientific and practical achievements within the academic community

The scientific and applied research contributions presented in the reference materials relate to the promotion of good health, restoration of dysfunctions with a view to preventing the development of disability, and a focus on education, professional development and current challenges in public health.

Some of the studies also address aspects of the electronic educational environment as an additional line of research in the context of contemporary educational practices.

I. Contributions in the field of public health and healthcare

1.1. Thematic area - Kinesitherapy and therapeutic massage

The textbook on kinesitherapy systematizes the theoretical foundations and application of kinesitherapy in various diseases with the aim of developing in-depth professional competence. The aims, tasks and means of kinesitherapy are structured within a clear methodological framework for education and practice. The clinical characteristics of the diseases under consideration are analyzed as a basis for the appropriate planning of kinesitherapeutic interventions. A link is established between theoretical preparation and practical application, with the textbook supporting both education and the students' future professional realization. The content is aligned with the approved curricula, which ensures its applicability in the educational process at Medical University - Plovdiv.

The manual "Kinesitherapy after Joint Replacement" was written primarily to meet the educational needs of students in the Master's programme "Rehabilitation, Wellness, Spa and Balneotherapy" at the Faculty of Public Health of Medical University - Plovdiv. Its contributions consist in the development of a specialized teaching manual on kinesitherapy after joint replacement, filling an existing gap in the education of Master's students in rehabilitation. The aims and tasks of kinesitherapy after joint replacement are defined, with an emphasis on functional recovery. Kinesitherapeutic programmes are developed and described in detail according to the periods and phases of recovery, facilitating their practical application in clinical work. The training is given a practical orientation by integrating theoretical knowledge with specific therapeutic approaches applicable in rehabilitation practice.

1.2. Thematic area - Disease prevention and prophylaxis

In-depth studies have been carried out, on the basis of which well-founded conclusions and recommendations have been formulated in relation to the prevention and prophylaxis of socially significant diseases.

1.3. Thematic area - Rehabilitation and occupational therapy

Emphasis is placed on the social significance of disease and the need for effective rehabilitation approaches to improve work capacity and the ability to perform self-care. The aim of occupational

therapy in orthopedic rehabilitation is defined, and various devices are described that facilitate self-care and the performance of different household and work-related activities, which occupational therapists prepare for patients with motor deficits.

I.4. Thematic area - Sport and health

The monograph examines the benefits of sport for health, as well as the role of physical education within the educational system in forming healthy habits among young people. The aims of sport and of the discipline of physical education are specified, while the individual texts address the development of motor abilities, health maintenance and the organization of physical activity at different ages. The contributions consist in the systematization of the health benefits of sport, with an emphasis on its role in maintaining and improving general health. The role of physical education in the educational system is analyzed as a key factor in forming healthy habits among young people. The aims of sport and physical education are established, including the development of motor abilities, health maintenance and the organization of physical activity across different age periods. The educational function of physical education is emphasized in relation to the formation of a lasting understanding of the importance of regular physical activity. The role of physical activity in cognitive development is highlighted, including improved concentration and academic performance through physiological mechanisms. The importance of sport for physical development is demonstrated, including the maintenance of muscle mass and flexibility and the slowing of ageing processes. The contribution of physical activity to quality of life is substantiated through its complex effects on physical and mental health.

I.5. Thematic area - Medical cosmetology

Research in the thematic area of medical cosmetology makes a significant scientific and applied research contribution by systematizing and developing contemporary approaches in kinesitherapy, rehabilitation and disease prevention. The effectiveness of various therapeutic methods (kinesitherapy, massage, occupational therapy, physical activity and device-based methods) has been demonstrated across a broad range of diseases and conditions. Original methodologies, textbooks and manuals have been developed and implemented to support both practice and student education.

II. Contributions in the field of education, including in an electronic environment

The studies and developments in the field of education, including in an electronic environment, make a complex scientific and educational contribution related to the improvement of health education, behavioral models and pedagogical practices. Interactive, digital and discussion-based teaching models have been developed and refined, increasing learners' motivation, activity and competences.

III. Contributions in the field of clinical pathology

The contributions in the field of clinical pathology consist in expanding knowledge of the clinical course of complex diseases through experimental, clinical and interdisciplinary studies.

In terms of **contribution**, the research output of **Assoc. Prof. Maria Vakrilova Becheva, PhD**, represents a complete and consistent body of research developed across several interrelated areas in public health, medical and health education, and the application of contemporary information technologies in education. The contributions in the individual areas have established national and international significance. They are both original and confirmatory in nature, building upon and complementing existing scientific concepts and practices. Across all thematic areas, contributions are evident at both conceptual and methodological levels - from the formulation of the research concept and the development of purpose-specific instruments, through the design and implementation of empirical studies, to the statistical processing of data. Well-founded interpretations, methodological solutions and practically applicable proposals are offered, contributing to the development of the respective scientific and professional fields. The submitted studies contribute to the theoretical enrichment and methodological improvement of the education of healthcare professionals, as well as to the development of an interdisciplinary approach applied to key societal issues related to health, education and the digitalization of the educational process.

Participation in research, educational and project activities

The submitted documents demonstrate the participation of **Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD**, in research, educational and practical project activities related both to the development of research and to the education and practical training of students. The candidate participates in 4 research projects and 2 international scientific and educational projects. Evidence has also been provided of participation in the project "Student Internships" in the capacity of academic mentor. These activities are relevant to the practical training of students, the relationship between academic

education and the real professional environment, and the development of research and educational activities at the Medical College - Plovdiv.

Scientific and creative achievements (academic standing)

Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, has an established reputation as a lecturer and specialist in rehabilitation, kinesitherapy and public health. Particularly indicative are the "Best Lecturer" awards received for each academic year during the 2020-2026 period, which constitute an objective indicator of the high evaluation of her teaching activity, professional standing and effective communication with students.

Research supervision, doctoral education and academic mentoring

Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, is actively involved in the education and practical training of students, postgraduate trainees and doctoral students. Her activities include curriculum development, practical training, academic mentoring, participation in thesis defenses and state examinations. Evidence has been submitted of supervision of doctoral students who have successfully defended their dissertations, as well as participation in academic activities related to the training and assessment of doctoral students and trainees. These activities present her as a lecturer and academic mentor who contributes to the development of professional and research competences in future specialists.

V. CITATION IMPACT (PUBLICATION VISIBILITY) OF THE CANDIDATE'S PUBLICATIONS IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE (PUBLICATION IMPACT PROFILE)

Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, has submitted a report on citations of her scientific works in national and international scholarly publications. After self-citations and duplicates were removed, 68 citations in Scopus and Web of Science and 36 citations in non-refereed sources were recorded. These indicators demonstrate scientific visibility, recognition of the candidate's publication activity and presence in the national and international academic community.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF TEACHING, METHODOLOGICAL AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITY, INCLUDING SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS, DOCTORAL STUDENTS AND POSTGRADUATE TRAINEES

The teaching activity of **Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD**, is active, consistent and directly related to the candidate's professional profile. It includes lectures, practical classes, development of teaching materials, participation in the education of Bachelor's and Master's students, as well as supervision of students and trainees.

The candidate's teaching workload is high - **1250.8** points. Particularly indicative are the "Best Lecturer" awards received for six consecutive years, which are an objective indicator of teaching excellence, professional standing and good communication with students.

The teaching-methodological activity of **Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD**, contributes to the development of education in rehabilitation and healthcare by combining theoretical preparation with practical orientation and academic mentoring.

VII. CRITICAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No omissions or inconsistencies have been identified in the submitted documents. The scientific and applied contributions are clearly differentiated, verifiable and consistent with the profile of the competition.

VIII. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE CANDIDATE'S COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF ZRASRB AND MEDICAL UNIVERSITY - PLOVDIV

The submitted materials show that the candidate meets all national criteria, significantly exceeds the internal indicators, and possesses the necessary academic, scientific and teaching capacity.

Particularly impressive are the high number of scientific publications, good international visibility, significant number of citations, high level of teaching activity, and substantial degree to which the candidate exceeds the minimum requirements under the points-based system of Medical University - Plovdiv.

Compliance with the requirements is unequivocal and substantiated by the submitted supporting evidence.

IX. CONCLUSION

Following a thorough analysis of the overall academic, teaching, research and organizational activity of **Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD**, I consider that the candidate fully meets the requirements for occupying the academic position of "Professor".

The submitted scientific works, teaching activity, scientific and applied research contributions, as well as the candidate's active engagement in the development of the academic environment, provide grounds for an unequivocally positive assessment.

In terms of contribution, the research output of Assoc. Prof. Becheva has theoretical, applied research, and organizational and educational value. It enriches scientific knowledge in the fields of kinesitherapy, public health and the education of healthcare professionals.

In view of the above, I give a **POSITIVE EVALUATION** and propose that the Scientific Jury award **Assoc. Prof. Maria Stamova Vakrilova Becheva, PhD**, the academic position of "**Professor**" in the scientific specialty "Theory and Methodology of Physical Education and Sports Training (including Methodology of Therapeutic Physical Training)", in higher education area 7. "Healthcare and Sports", professional field 7.4. "Public Health", at the Department of Rehabilitation and Preventive Health Care, Medical College, Medical University - Plovdiv.

Date: 18.08.2026

Plovdiv

Statement prepared by:


Prof. Maria Bozhkova, PhD

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