

OPINION

ON THE COMPETITION FOR OCCUPYING THE ACADEMIC POSITION “PROFESSOR” AT MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – PLOVDIV

I. Analysis of the Candidate’s Career Profile

Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, is an established lecturer and researcher in the field of therapeutic physical culture / kinesitherapy, rehabilitation and adapted physical activity. Her professional path encompasses over 30 years of practical and academic experience, including long-term work as a rehabilitation specialist in clinical structures and consistent academic development at the Medical University – Plovdiv, where she has been a lecturer since 2008, an associate professor since 2018, and head of department since 2026. She holds a Master’s degree in Kinesitherapy, a PhD degree (2012), a specialization in Medical Pedagogy (2024), as well as extensive additional qualifications in modern therapeutic methods, manual techniques, ergotherapy, simulation training, and others.

II. General Description of the Materials Submitted for the Competition

The submitted materials include: a CV and documents confirming professional experience; evidence of acquired educational degrees and qualifications; a list and copies of scientific publications, monographs, textbooks and manuals; documents for participation in scientific projects; data on teaching activities, mobilities and awards; the monographic work proposed for the competition; citation reports and scientometric indicators. The materials are complete, well-structured and meet the requirements of MU–Plovdiv.

III. Evaluation of the Candidate’s Scientific Works for Overall Academic Development

Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, has submitted one habilitation work in the form of a monograph, one published book based on her defended dissertation, and a total of 53 full-text publications after obtaining the academic degree “Associate Professor” (34 publications in refereed and indexed journals in Scopus and Web of Science, and 19 in non-refereed journals), 3 university textbooks and 2 teaching manuals. The scientific output is substantial in volume, diverse in thematic scope, and reflects in-depth research in kinesitherapy, therapeutic massage, rehabilitation, pathokinesiological diagnostics and prevention.

The requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its regulations, and the relevant rules of MU–Plovdiv for scientometric indicators for the

position “Professor” have been met, and in several categories—number of publications, citations, project activity, textbooks, etc.—they are exceeded.

Associate Professor Becheva's scientific contributions span public health and health care, education including e-learning environments, and clinical pathology. They include original research in kinesitherapy, therapeutic massage, rehabilitation, prevention and public health, supported by evidence and publications in referred journals. The applied contributions are expressed in the development and implementation of author methodologies that systematize modern therapeutic and educational approaches. These applied contributions have a direct impact on clinical practice and teaching, improving rehabilitation outcomes and supporting the professional training of students. The developments are interdisciplinary, relevant, and fully aligned with the announced scientific specialty.

Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, actively disseminates the results of her research through participation in international and national scientific forums (68 international webinars, 10 national), teaching mobilities under the Erasmus program in Belgium, Portugal and Ireland, and participation in European and national projects related to public health, rehabilitation and prevention. Her scientific developments have clear practical application in student training and clinical practice.

She participates in research and educational projects (Ministry of Education projects “Student Practices” – phases I and II; European project “FRESHER” under Horizon 2020; projects in social services and obesity prevention, etc.). This demonstrates high project activity and strong skills for working in multidisciplinary teams. She is a member of the European Public Health Association and the Bulgarian Physiotherapy Association. She is the scientific supervisor of two successfully defended PhD candidates. She has repeatedly served as a member of scientific juries for awarding the PhD degree and academic positions, which indicates recognized scientific authority.

IV. Evaluation of Monographic Work

The monographic work submitted for the competition is an original scientific study reflecting an in-depth analysis of current issues in the field of sport and health. Its structure is logical, the methodology is correct, and the conclusions are scientifically substantiated and practically applicable. The monograph contributes to the development of the professional field and meets the criteria for a habilitation work.

V. Citation of Publications

The publications of Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, are cited in national and international editions. The total number of points for this indicator significantly exceeds the requirements.

VI. Comprehensive Evaluation of Teaching and Methodological Activity

Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, has over 18 years of teaching experience at MU–Plovdiv. She teaches lectures and practical classes at the Medical College and the Faculty of Public Health with full in-class and extracurricular workload. She has participated in international mobilities with lecture courses and has received numerous awards for “Best Lecturer” based on student evaluations. Her teaching and methodological activity is impressive—developed textbooks, manuals, modern methodologies, and active involvement in the training of students, residents and PhD candidates.

VII. Critical Notes and Recommendations

I recommend more active participation as a supervisor of PhD candidates, and continuation of work on international scientific projects.

VIII. Evaluation of Compliance with Minimum National and Institutional Requirements

Based on the submitted materials and scientometric indicators, Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, meets and exceeds the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff, as well as the specific requirements of MU–Plovdiv for field 7.4. “Public Health”. Her scientific output, teaching activity, project involvement and international engagement fully correspond to the criteria for occupying the position “Professor”.

IX. Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive evaluation of the scientific, teaching, project and academic activity of Assoc. Prof. Maria Becheva, PhD, I consider that the candidate **fully meets** the mandatory and specific conditions and scientometric criteria for occupying the academic position “Professor” at the Medical University – Plovdiv.

2 August 2026

Reviewer:

Prof. Evgenia Dimitrova, DSc

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