

KONSTANTIN
PRESLAVSKY
UNIVERSITY
SHUMEN



*ШУМЕНСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
“ЕПИСКОП КОНСТАНТИН ПРЕСЛАВСКИ”*

OUTLOOK

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Scientific field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences
Professional direction 3.9. Tourism (Hospitality and Tourist Markets)

Regarding: competition for **associate professor** in scientific field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.9. Tourism (Sustainable Destination Development) at IBHS.

I. Information about the competition

The competition was announced for the needs of the IBHS according to the Decision of the Academic Council with Protocol No. 4/12.02.2024. I participate as a part of the scientific jury for the competition according to Order No. 29/13.02.2024 of the Rector of the IBHS.

II. Brief information about the candidate

There is one candidate in the announced competition - Desislava Ivanova Alexova PhD, ch. assistant at the IBHS.

III. Completion of the requirements for occupying the academic position

The candidate in the competition submitted the following completed references for consideration by the scientific jury:

1. Card for the fulfillment of the quantitative requirements for occupying the academic position "associate professor";
2. Evidential material, including bibliographic reference, summaries of scientific works, scientific works themselves, etc.

According to the provided references, the candidacy of ch. assistant Desislava Ivanova Alexova, PhD, significantly exceeds the minimal national quantitative and qualitative requirements for holding the academic position "associate professor". According to the report, the applicant covers 859.5 points based on the accepted criteria for the national minimal requirements, which exceeds twice the required 400 points. Based on an examination of the evidentiary material, I consider that there are no criteria with actual non-fulfillment of the requirements.

IV. General characteristics of the publications submitted for review

The scientific works submitted for review are entirely in the field of tourism and its sustainable development, which fully corresponds to the direction of the announced competition. Some of the publications have an interdisciplinary nature and are related to other scientific areas such as protected areas in Bulgaria, environmental protection, alternative tourism, tourism education. The mentioned work concerns important and particularly current issues in the development of modern society.

V. Evaluation of the obtained scientific and scientific-applied results

Regarding the quantitative parameters in a positive aspect is the fact that the candidate has published two independent books, which should be noted. One of them is a monograph, and the other is a book published on the basis of a defended dissertation. One article and one study indexed in global databases are submitted for review. Part of the presented articles and reports are in a foreign language, as well as in foreign publications, which popularizes the candidate's scientific production and makes it visible to a wider range of readers.

The monographic work proposed for review "Sustainable development of the municipality of Chiprovtsi as a tourist destination. Tourism Brand Creation and Strategic Planning" includes 415 pages structured in an: introduction, 4 chapters, conclusion, lists of figures, tables and abbreviations, bibliography. The monographic work is distinguished by exceptional precision and thoroughness in the research and presentation of the researched problem. The methods used are suitable and applicable for other future studies of other similar territorial systems of recreation and tourism.

In all the publications proposed for review, a positive impression makes the fact that current problems of modern society are considered, with sustainable development standing out in the foreground. In all the mentioned works, the author's thesis is well formulated and clearly presented.

The main thematic directions and corresponding scientific contributions in the candidate's research work and publication activity are:

- application of the concept of sustainable development in the regional development of tourism in Bulgaria (monograph, monograph based on a dissertation, articles and reports in the presented bibliographic reference under numbers 4, 10, 18, 28, 34, 37, 39, 41, studies under numbers 52 and 54);
- protected areas in Bulgaria (6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 24, 53);
- alternative tourism with emphasis on ecotourism and its varieties (5, 8, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 29, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53);
- management and competitiveness of tourist destinations (monographs, publications under numbers 6, 7, 20, 22, 24, 28, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43, 50).

VI. Assessment of received scientific and scientific-applied contributions

On the basis of the scientific and scientific-applied results presented above, the following main scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the work of Dr. Alexova can be singled out:

1. Theoretical contributions to the enrichment and development of the science of tourism (Tourismology);

In the monographic work submitted for review, basic theoretical propositions related to planning, development and branding of a tourist destination are presented and upgraded. Previous

studies of various models of the territorial system for recreation and tourism (TSRT) have also been upgraded, based on which tourism resources, material base, administrative capacity, market environment and human resources of the destination have been analyzed as subsystems of the TSRT.

In the articles and reports proposed for review, theoretical propositions regarding alternative, solidarity, volunteer, educational and responsible tourism are presented and discussed, the latter of which are poorly represented in Bulgarian literature. Theoretical statements and good practices from Bulgaria in the field of tourism branding, gamification and its application in the tourism sector, education and culture were also studied and discussed.

2. Scientific and applied contributions to the study of relatively little-explored territories;

Good practices for planning and developing a tourist destination at the local level have been studied and analyzed, including underdeveloped and depopulated areas that have not yet been established as tourist destinations. This is a good basis for their better future development in the field of tourism.

3. Scientific and applied contributions to promote the environmental cause and ecological management thinking;

Problems related to the protection of tourist resources, planning and management of tourism in the protected areas were studied and discussed. Different specialized types of tourism and alternative tourist offer of the destinations are analyzed in theoretical and practical-applied aspect.

4. Practical-applied contributions

The most significant here is the contribution of the monographic work related to the identification of the strategic goals and priorities for sustainable tourism development of the municipality of Chiprovtsi as a tourist destination, tied to specific measures for their implementation and a practically focused action plan, which are applied in the Development Program of tourism of Chiprovtsi municipality, which was also developed by the author.

5. Other contributions

In addition to the main contributions, it should be noted that Dr. Alexova also contributes to the study of problems related to the training and management of personnel in tourism, as well as to the study of mechanisms for the sustainable development of tourism in the national resorts in Bulgaria. In the monographic work, existing tourist zoning schemes were analyzed, based on which an author's taxonomic scheme for tourist micro-zoning and destination zoning was compiled. Good practices for tourist zoning of several municipalities in Bulgaria, developed by the author, are indicated. European criteria and indicators for sustainable tourism development at the local level have been derived, and a comparative analysis has been made with the author's scientific research experience in another destination.

VII. Evaluation of the overall work of the candidate

The evaluation of the overall work of the candidate includes an evaluation not only of their scientific and research activity, but also of the educational and teaching work and the public activity of the candidate. The comprehensive review of the scientific publications of ch. assistant D. Alexova PhD shows a permanent and deep scientific interest in the problems of sustainable development and related topics, as well as a significant scientific and practical contribution to the development of good tourism practices at the local level. The candidate's curriculum vitae shows many years of experience in teaching tourism in higher education, as well as practical experience in the tourism industry. Dr. Alexova is an extremely active public figure, as evidenced by the

large number of references received from various municipalities and organizations, membership in the Association of Parks in Bulgaria, as well as the management of "Kreativo.com" LTD, etc.

VIII. Critical notes, recommendations and questions

In the attached reference with the summaries of the scientific works proposed for review in the competition, under indicator 7, a duplication and the same publication is noticed, which is simultaneously numbered 38 and 40. At the same time, in the attached bibliographic reference of the publications, different numbering is used, which complicates the work of the scientific jury.

It is recommended that the applicant adhere to the minimal national requirements for holding the academic position of "associate professor". The required minimum of 400 points was exceeded by 459.5 points, which deprives the candidate of the possibility to use the already submitted publications in a future competition for the academic position of "professor".

It is recommended that among the publications with a similar object and subject of research, only the most significant one be selected for inclusion in the bibliographic reference for participation in the competition. For example, publications under numbers 27, 34, 52, 54 overlap to some extent with the monograph entered under number 3, etc. This does not significantly lower the applicant's scientometric indicators, nor does it detract from their achievements.

The exceptional professionalism of Dr. Alexova could find a wider audience with more publications in global databases, as well as other foreign publications, which would contribute to a wider popularization of the considered current, significant and interesting problems.

IX. Summary conclusion

The inquiries made testify that the candidate meets the minimal national requirements and the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, which is why I express a positive opinion and propose Ch. assistant Desislava Ivanova Alexova PhD to be elected as an associate professor in scientific field 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, scientific direction 3.9. Tourism (Sustainable Development of Destinations) at IBHS.

04/05/2024 / Shumen

Signature: