

УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ЗА НАЦИОНАЛНО И СВЕТОВНО
СТОПАНСТВОUNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD
ECONOMY

REVIEW

regarding the competition for the academic position of **“Associate Professor”** in Professional Field 3.9. **“Tourism”**, scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in Restaurant Management, Consumer Behaviour)”, announced by the University of Economics – Varna

1. General Information

Reviewer: Prof. Tanya Petrova Parusheva, Dr.Sc.

Field of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”

Professional field 3.8. “Economics”

Scientific specialty “Economics and management (tourism)”

Department of “Economics of tourism”

University of National and World Economy, Sofia

Grounds for preparing the review: Order № RD 06-99/04.06.2026 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna regarding the appointment of a Scientific Jury and the Minutes of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury for the election of the Chair and the appointment of reviewers for the competition, dated **16.07.2026**.

The review has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for its Implementation (RILDASRB), and the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna (RDAS).

2. Information about the competition

The competition for the academic position of “associate professor” was announced in the State Gazette, issue **44/14.05.2026**, in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.9. “Tourism”, scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in Restaurant Management, Consumer Behavior)” for the needs of the Department of “Tourism” at the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna.

3. Candidate in the competition

The only candidate who has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition is **Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD**, from the Department of “Tourism” at the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna. She has submitted a set of

documents that is in full compliance with the LDASRB, the RILDASRB, and the RDAS at the University of Economics – Varna.

Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, exceeds the minimum national requirements for the academic position of “Associate Professor” in the field of higher education for which the competition was announced under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the LDASRB. She has accumulated a total of 694.7 points under indicators A + C + D + E, with the required minimum being 400 points.

Table 1. MNR for the academic position of “Associate Professor” in Professional Field 3.9 “Tourism” according to the LDASRB and declared points by Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD

Indicator Group	Points according MNR	Points declared by Hristina Filipova, PhD
Group A	50	50
Group B	-	-
Group C	100	100
Group D	200	319.7
Group E	50	225
Total for “Associate professor”	400	694.7

The candidate in the competition for associate professor also meets the additional quantitative requirements of the University of Economics – Varna under Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Law on the State Administration of Higher Education and Research, scoring 487 points with a minimum threshold of 170 points.

Table 2. Quantitative Requirements for the Academic Position of “Associate Professor” at the University of Economics – Varna and declared points by Chief Assistant Professor Filipova, PhD

Indicator Group	Required minimum points	Points declared by Hristina Filipova, PhD
Group F	100	100
Group G	40	67
	15	225
	55	292
Group H	15	95
Total	170	487

The candidate meets the requirements of Art. 101 of the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna (RDAS):

1. She has acquired the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”;

2. She has held the academic position of “Chief Assistant Professor” for more than two years at the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna;
3. She has demonstrated proven achievements in her field.

4. Candidate data (personal characteristics)

Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, was born in the city of Varna. She completed her secondary education at the IV Foreign Language High School “Frédéric Joliot – Curie” specialising in French language. In 2011, she graduated from the University of Economics – Varna with a Bachelor’s degree in “International Economic Relations”. In the period 2011–2013, she successively obtained a Master’s degree 1, specialty “Management and Marketing” (Management des Organisations parcours Marketing), and a Master’s degree 2, specialty “Management of Taste and Luxury, Research Profile” (Économie et Gestion du Goût et du Luxe, profil recherche) at the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne, France. In 2020, she obtained the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in Professional Field 3.9 “Tourism” after defending a dissertation thesis on the topic “Marketing strategies regarding the offer of souvenirs based on the cultural differences of the tourists”.

Chief Assistant Professor Filipova, PhD works as an international client manager at International Admission Services, and since 2016 she has been the owner and manager of “Infinity Escape” Ltd. At the same time, from 2014 to 2020 she has been a part-time lecturer at the College of Tourism – Varna and the Department of IOT at the University of Economics – Varna. Since February 2021 she has been a Chief Assistant Professor at the Department of “Tourism” at the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna.

Her scientific interests include: Restaurant Management, Consumer Behavior, Social Psychology, Cultural Heritage, Intercultural Communication, Human Resource Management, Marketing of Luxury Products.

Chief Assistant Professor, PhD Filipova has excellent written and spoken French and English skills, and basic Japanese.

She was awarded the **Varna Collective Award in the field of social sciences twice** – in 2023 and 2025, and in 2021 she won second place and the audience award in the Francophone scientific competition under the auspices of AUF and Institut Français Bulgarie “My Dissertation in 180 Seconds” (Ma thèse en 180 secondes).

She is a member of the Union of Scientists – Varna, as well as the Varna Tourism Chamber.

The indicated personal characteristics and results achieved by the candidate are prerequisites for a successful professional and academic career.

5. Description of the scientific works

Chief Assistant Professor, PhD Filipova, has submitted **30 publications** for participation in the competition, all of which have been accepted for review. They have a total volume of 778 pages and are structurally distributed as follows:

Table 3. Type and volume of the reviewed publications of Chief Assistant Professor Filipova, PhD

№	Type of the scientific publications	Independent		Co-authored		Total	
		numbe r	page s	numbe r	page s	numbe r	page s
1.	Monographs	1	256	3	58	4	314
2.	Scientific studies	-	-	6	150	6	150
3.	Scientific articles	2	17	6	96	8	113
4.	Scientific papers	4	27	7	78	11	105
5.	Text books	1	96	-	-	1	96
6.	Other publications	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total:	8	396	22	382	30	778

The table shows that the candidate participated in the announced competition with **1 independent monograph - habilitation thesis; 9 monographs and studies; 8 scientific articles, 11 scientific papers and 1 textbook**. Of the submitted publications, 8 are independent and 22 are co-authored, **21 are in English and 2 in French**, which is a prerequisite for reaching a wide audience.

The candidate impresses with her publication activity and the high quality of her scientific works. In terms of structure and number of pages, monographs and research studies prevail, accounting for 59.7%, followed by articles with a total share of 14.5%. **Five** of the submitted studies are referenced and indexed in the world-renowned scientific information database **SCOPUS**, for which supporting evidence has been provided, while 16 are included in the National Reference List of Contemporary Bulgarian Scientific Publications with Peer Review, maintained by NACID.

5.1. Evaluation of the monograph

High appreciation should be given to the candidate's independent monographic habilitation thesis: *Filipova, H. The impact of consumer behaviour on the integration of innovations in the restaurant business Varna: University Publishing House "Science and Economics", 2026, 256 p. (Prof. Tsani Kalyandzhiev Library; Book 114), ISBN (print) 978-954-21-1219-8*. The monographic work fully complies with the requirements of Art. 112, para. 2 of the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna. It was published by the specialised scientific publishing house "Science and Economics", discussed at the primary academic unit – the department of "Tourism" (Protocol No. 3/09.10.2025), reviewed by two

habilitated academics – Associate Professor Desislava Serafimova, PhD, and Associate Professor Lyubomir Georgiev, PhD, and addresses a significant scientific and applied modern research problem.

The monograph is directly related to the topic of the announced competition and has an innovative character; the studied issue is insufficiently researched, particularly in the national specialised literature. In this form, the publication is the **first of its kind in Bulgaria**. The author defends the thesis that consumer attitudes and evaluations across different generations are key factors for the implementation of innovations in the restaurant business in the city of Varna.

The **first chapter** of the work outlines the features of the restaurant industry, systematizes them in a table and comments on classification structures, and outlines the features and components of the restaurant product. Consumer behaviour in the restaurant industry is characterized – in general and by four generations (B, X, Y, Z), and its contemporary changes are presented. Attention is also paid to the essence, characteristics and classification of innovations in the sector. The author's model for integrating innovations in the restaurant industry is also presented.

The **second chapter** analyses the structure of Bulgarian restaurant management, respectively that of Varna as part of it. A methodology for the empirical study has been developed, and the characteristics of the survey conducted among consumers in the city of Varna are presented. The obtained responses are analysed, and conclusions are drawn regarding the opinions and evaluations of respondents concerning the state of restaurants in Varna and the innovations integrated within them. In addition to the main analysis, an analysis by generations has also been conducted, reflecting the specific characteristics of different demographic groups of customers and identifying the main differences in their consumer behaviour.

The **third chapter** presents and analyses consumer evaluations regarding the possibilities for integrating innovations in restaurants in the city of Varna. Semi-structured interviews with experts have also been conducted, and their opinions have been summarised and presented through content analysis. Numerous benchmark practices for successful innovations in the restaurant sector have been systematised, and proposals for integrating innovations into the products of restaurants in Varna have been formulated.

The monographic work is based on a broad theoretical basis and a rich methodological toolkit, successfully complements the specialized literature in scientific and applied terms and is intended for a wide audience.

The remaining publications are also related to the main areas of the announced competition while at the same time being sufficiently diverse.

The scientific works presented by Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, are of high quality from a linguistic and stylistic perspective. In quantitative, structural, and content-related terms, they fully comply with the

requirements of the LDASRB, the RILDASRB, as well as Art. 101, item 3 and Art. 112, para. 2 of the RDAS at the University of Economics – Varna.

6. Identification of the contributions in the candidate's research work

The candidate's creative output clearly demonstrates significant contributions, which are accepted by the reviewer and may be summarised as follows:

1. Scientific and applied scientific contributions in the field of restaurant management

1.1. The theoretical foundation of restaurant management has been further developed through a comprehensive study of its nature, structure, and place within the tourism system. The author proposes her own definition of restaurant management as an economic and social activity, systematises national and international classifications of the restaurant superstructure, analyses the specific characteristics of restaurant activities, and clarifies the structure of the restaurant product as an aggregate of tangible and intangible elements forming the consumer experience.

Publications: 5, 31, 34.

1.2. The first comprehensive study in the Bulgarian specialised literature dedicated to the interrelationship between consumer behaviour and the implementation of innovations in restaurant management has been developed. The study integrates theoretical analysis and empirical results, thereby expanding scientific knowledge regarding the factors determining the choice and evaluation of the restaurant product.

Publications: 5, 31.

1.3. The concept of local brands and gastronomic heritage as factors for the sustainable development of restaurant management and tourist destinations has been further developed. The role of traditional foods and food souvenirs as a means of preserving and promoting cultural heritage and local identity has been outlined.

Publications: 9, 10, 22, 27, 30.

1.4. An in-depth analysis of the current state and development of the restaurant sector in Bulgaria and the city of Varna has been conducted. The structural characteristics of food and entertainment establishments have been systematised according to key indicators, enabling an assessment of trends and the development potential of the sector.

Publications: 5, 31, 34.

2. Scientific and applied scientific contributions in the field of consumer behaviour

2.1. The theory of consumer behaviour in restaurant management has been further developed through an analysis of the influence of the complex restaurant product and through the systematisation of the characteristics of

consumers from different generations. Profiles of generations BB, X, Y, and Z have been developed, revealing differences in their expectations, preferences, and consumer attitudes.

Publications: 5, 31.

2.2. Scientific knowledge regarding the perception of technological innovations in tourism and hospitality has been expanded through the development and testing of an author's conceptual model for evaluating consumer preferences towards the use of artificial intelligence and robots.

Publications: 6, 8, 20, 28.

2.3. The concept of the influence of cultural differences on tourist behaviour has been further developed through the adaptation of Hofstede's model to the tourism context and through the study of the interrelationship between cultural heritage, local identity, and consumer decisions. On this basis, good practices for sustainable and regenerative tourism have been identified.

Publications: 7, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

2.4. Original empirical studies on consumer attitudes in tourism and restaurant management have been conducted. A significant contribution is represented by the first study of its kind among residents of the city of Varna from generations BB, X, Y, and Z regarding the restaurant product and the innovations integrated within it. Consumer attitudes towards the tourism profiling of municipalities as a tool for more effective utilisation of local tourism potential have also been examined.

Publications: 5, 10, 27, 33.

3. Scientific and applied scientific contributions in the field of innovations

3.1. The theory of innovations in restaurant management has been further developed through the creation of an author's classification of innovation types and a universal model for their implementation. The proposed classification includes conceptual, product, process, organisational, marketing, open, crisis, technological, digital, sustainable, and socially responsible innovations, while the developed model places the consumer at the centre of the innovation process.

Publication: 5.

3.2. Scientific knowledge regarding smart tourism destinations has been enriched through the analysis and systematisation of models, approaches, and good practices for sustainable management, digital transformation, and increasing competitiveness.

Publications: 12, 18, 19, 20.

3.3. Systematization of contemporary models and good practices for the development of smart cities as a tool for sustainable management of the urban environment.

Publications: 13, 14, 32.

3.4. Practically applicable solutions for implementing innovations in restaurant management have been developed. Contemporary innovation practices in the individual elements of the restaurant product have been studied and systematized, and based on the conducted empirical research, author's concepts for a themed restaurant in the city of Varna have been developed, taking into account the preferences of different generations of consumers.

Publications: 5.

Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, has submitted evidence of **17 citations** of 4 of her works, all of which are indexed in SCOPUS, thereby achieving 225 points and exceeding more than four times the required minimum of 50 points. This demonstrates the international recognition of the candidate's publications, supported by her **h-index of 2 in SCOPUS with 62 citations**; h-index of 2 in Web of Science with 43 citations; as well as **h-index of 4 in Google Scholar with 150 citations** and an i10-index of 3 in the same database.

The summarised contributions correspond to the scientific specialisation of the announced competition and demonstrate the candidate's ability to analyse and address significant scientific and applied problems.

7. Participation in Research Projects and Scientific Forums

Chief Assistant Professor Filipova, PhD, has participated in **10 scientific and applied research projects**, 7 of which were funded through the targeted state subsidy for scientific research, while **3 are international projects**: the international project (2023), Professionals' Innovation Training for Pesca-Tourism Activities (PESCAVET), Project No. 2020-1-LV01-KA202-077503; the international project (2024), Creating Cultural Heritage Businesses through Hybrid Learning Models & Hands-on Curricula across Borders (acronym Cultural BEES), funded under the CREA-CULT-2023-COOP-2 programme; and the international project Voice of Young Researchers, No. 2021-2-BG01-KA154-YOU-000039069.

The above-mentioned projects have resulted in tangible outcomes, including published monographs, training programmes, and educational platforms.

The candidate has also participated in more than **20 scientific forums**, including conferences ("Tourism beyond expectations", organised by the Department of Tourism Economics at the University of National and World Economy; "Contemporary Tourism – Rethinking opportunities and directions for its development" and "Tourism and Innovations", organised by the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna; "Innovative Regenerative Tourism – Theory and Good Practices", organised by the Agricultural University – Plovdiv; "Tourism, Business, Education", organised by BDU; "Contemporary Tourism – Traditions and innovations", organised by the Department of Tourism Geography at Sofia University "St. Kliment

Ohridski”), as well as the Black Sea Tourism Forum, round tables discussion forums and others.

8. Teaching activities

The teaching activity of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD is diverse, she leads lectures and seminars in the “professional bachelor” and “bachelor” programs, full-time, part-time and distance learning in Restaurant Management, Social Psychology in Tourism, Human Resources Management in Tourism, Comparative Economic Systems (taught in English), International Political Economy (taught in English), Marketing and Business Communications in Tourism at the University of Economics – Varna, as well as Contemporary Nutrition and Culinary Culture – lectures, Burgas State University “Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov”.

She also teaches Erasmus+ students at the University of Economics – Varna in the courses Marketing of Luxury Products and Intercultural Communication (both taught in English), delivering both lectures and practical classes.

During the last two academic years (2024 - 2025/2025 - 2026), the study load report shows the candidate’s full classroom workload of 904 hours.

Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD is also a part-time lecturer in the discipline “Personnel Assessment” in the qualification in “Human Resources Management” at the Centre for Continuing Education (CPE) at the University of Economics – Varna. She is a lecturer in the short-term intensive program (BIP) “Dukenet Spring Marketing Simulation” at the University of Economics – Varna.

Her excellent command of French and English has also enabled an active international teaching career. The candidate has undertaken teaching mobility periods at the Lycée des Métiers Gastronomie-Hôtellerie-Tourismes Georges-Frêche (**Montpellier, France**) and Universitatea “Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu (**Sibiu, Romania**), and has delivered online lectures to students at AI Universal University – Mumbai. In 2025, she also taught in the international BIP programme BrandY at Université Savoie Mont Blanc (**Annecy, France**).

Chief Assistant Professor Filipova, PhD, has made a significant contribution to the development and updating of the academic documentation for the study programmes “MHR” and “MTRB” at the College of Tourism – Varna, as well as the “Tourism” programme at the University of Economics – Varna. She is a co-author of 15 course syllabi. The teaching aid she authored independently for educational purposes is of high academic value.

The work of Chief Assistant Professor Filipova with students includes leading student teams for scientific research, leading and reviewing graduation theses, tutoring, leading a team of students for the project “Creative Workshop for Young Entrepreneurs in Tourism”, mentoring students from the University

of Economics – Varna in the international BIP program in brand management BrandY in Annecy, France, and others.

Chief Assistant Professor Filipova, PhD has extensive teaching experience and a high level of preparation for the academic position of Associate Professor. The candidate's academic competence corresponds to the specifics of the competition.

9. Plagiarism

In the publications submitted for review, there is no proven plagiarism, use of incorrect data and/or incorrect reference to other people's scientific works in accordance with the statutory procedure.

10. Critical comments and questions to the candidate

I have no critical remarks regarding the research and teaching activities of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD. I recommend that, in her future research, she focus her attention on innovations in the restaurant management on a national level.

11. Conclusion

The candidacy of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD for the academic position of "Associate Professor" complies with the regulatory requirements under the Law on the Promotion of Higher Education and Research, the Regulations for its implementation and the additional requirements of the University of Economics – Varna. She possesses undeniable merits as a lecturer and researcher, with proven contributions in the scientific specialty of the competition.

I clearly state my **positive assessment "FOR"** the only candidate in the competition for associate professor. With full conviction, I vote for **Chief Assistant Professor HRISTINA PLAMENOVA FILIPOVA, PhD** to be elected to the academic position of **"Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.9. "Tourism", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in the restaurant industry, Consumer Behavior)"** for the needs of the Department of "Tourism" at the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna.

Sofia,
03.08.2026.

Reviewer:
(Prof. Tanya Parusheva, Dr.Sc.)

Заличена информация съгласно
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ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ВАРНА

Вх. № 7220-1400/13.08.2026

EVALUATION REPORT

by Assoc. Prof. Georgina Lukanova, PhD

Member of the Scientific Jury

for the Competition for the Academic Position of Associate Professor
in Professional Field 3.9 Tourism, academic speciality “Economics and
Management (Tourism – Innovations in Restaurant Management,
Consumer Behaviour)”,

announced by the University of Economics – Varna

1. General information

This review has been prepared by Assoc. Prof. Georgina Georgieva Lukanova, PhD, Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism, Faculty of Management, University of Economics – Varna, Higher Education Area 3 Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.9 Tourism.

The report is prepared based on Order No. RD-06-99/04.06.2026 issued by the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna.

2. Information about the Competition

The competition is announced in the Higher Education Area 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field 3.9 Tourism, academic speciality “Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in Restaurant Management, Consumer Behaviour)”. It was opened to meet the staffing needs of the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism – Varna and was promulgated in State Gazette, Issue No. 44 of 14 May 2026. This Evaluation Report has also been prepared in accordance with the decision adopted at the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 16 July 2026.

3. Candidate in the Competition

The sole candidate in the competition is Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD, a member of the academic staff of the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism – Varna. She has submitted all documents required for participation in the competition, in full compliance with the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, the relevant secondary legislation, and the Regulations on Academic Staff Development of the University of Economics – Varna.

The candidate meets both the national minimum requirements and the additional institutional criteria for appointment to the academic position, exceeding them by a substantial margin.

Table 1. Minimum National Requirements for the Academic Position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 3.9 Tourism under the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Points Declared by the Candidate

Indicator Group	Points Required under the Minimum National Requirements of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria	Candidate's Points
Group „A”	50	50
Group „B”	-	-
Group „B”	100	100
Group „Г”	200	319.7
Group „Д”	50	225
Total for the Academic Position of Associate Professor	400	694.7

Table 2. Quantitative Requirements for the Academic Position of Associate Professor at the University of Economics – Varna and Points Declared by the Candidate

Indicator Group	Minimum Required Points	Candidate's Points
Group „Ж”	100	100
Group „З”	40	67
	15	225
	55	292
Group „И”	15	95
Total for the Academic Position of Associate Professor	170	487

4. Information about the Candidate

Hristina Filipova obtained her Bachelor's degree in International Economic Relations in 2011. Between 2011 and 2013, she completed two Master's degree programmes at Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France: Management, specialising in Marketing, and Management of Taste and Luxury, with a research profile. In 2020, she was awarded a PhD in Economics and Management (Tourism) by the University of Economics – Varna, having successfully defended a doctoral thesis entitled “Marketing Strategies for Souvenir Offerings in Relation to Tourists' Cultural Differences”.

The candidate's professional development combines practical experience in marketing and leisure activities with an academic career. Dr Hristina Filipova

currently holds the position of Chief Assistant Professor in the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism – Varna. Her research interests encompass restaurant management, consumer behaviour, social psychology, cultural heritage, intercultural communication, human resource management, and luxury product marketing.

Hristina Filipova is a member of the Union of Scientists – Varna and the Varna Chamber of Tourism. She has twice been a recipient, as part of a team, of the Varna Award in the field of science and education. In 2021, she was awarded second place in the Francophone research communication competition “Ma thèse en 180 secondes”

5. Evaluation of the Candidate's Research Output

Following a thorough review of the research publications submitted for consideration in the competition, the following key observations can be made regarding their quantitative and structural characteristics.

The candidate has submitted a total of 30 research publications, comprising 778 pages, which represents a fully sufficient body of research output for participation in a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor. In quantitative terms, the submitted materials meet the established national requirements and provide a sound basis for a comprehensive evaluation of the candidate's research activity.

In structural terms, the publications comprise one sole-authored monograph, contributions to three co-authored monographs and six research studies, eight research articles, of which two are sole-authored and six co-authored, eleven conference papers, and one teaching handbook. A strong indication of the quality and scholarly merit of the candidate's research is the fact that five of the publications to which she has contributed have appeared in journals or other academic outlets indexed in internationally recognised databases. The conference papers have been presented at national and international conferences, reflecting the candidate's active participation in academic forums.

The candidate's research output includes a substantial number of co-authored publications, demonstrating her ability to work effectively within research teams and to contribute to collaborative research initiatives. At the same time, her sole-authored publications demonstrate her capacity to conduct independent research.

In terms of content, the candidate's research output reveals a coherent and thematically integrated research profile addressing current issues in tourism, restaurant management and hospitality. The analysis of the publications allows four principal research strands to be identified, with clear conceptual and thematic links between them. The first strand focuses on consumer behaviour and its influence on the development of tourism and restaurant products. The second encompasses innovation and technological transformation in restaurant management, hospitality and tourism. The third addresses cultural heritage and local identity and their role in the development of competitive tourism products and destinations. The fourth focuses on the smart, sustainable and regenerative development of tourism destinations and

territories. On this basis, it can be concluded that the submitted research output demonstrates a strong alignment with the competition's thematic profile, particularly in the areas of innovation in restaurant management and consumer behaviour.

For the competition, Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, has submitted a habilitation monograph entitled “The Influence of Consumer Behaviour on the Integration of Innovations in the Restaurant Business”. The work constitutes an original, independent, and innovative research study addressing a current and significant research topic. It has been peer-reviewed by two well-established scholars and published in the “Tsani Kalyandzhiev” Monograph Series of the Science and Economics Publishing House at the University of Economics – Varna. The research object, subject matter and period covered by the study do not overlap with those of the candidate's doctoral thesis, thus satisfying the statutory requirement laid down in Article 24(1)(3) of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

In my assessment, the research output of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, is characterised by a clear research focus, analytical rigour, depth of inquiry, sound structure and thematic coherence, and is fully consistent with the academic profile of the competition.

6. Identification of the Candidate's Research Contributions

On the basis of the content of the submitted publications, the following scholarly and applied research contributions can be identified and systematised:

Scholarly Contributions

The existing body of knowledge on the relationship between consumer behaviour and innovation processes in restaurant management has been advanced by demonstrating that the effectiveness of innovation depends to a considerable extent on consumer attitudes, generational characteristics, and the perceived value of innovations.

The theoretical understanding of the integration of technological innovations in tourism and restaurant management has been extended through an examination of the impact of automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence on tourism services and the consumer experience.

The conceptual understanding of the role of cultural heritage and local identity as factors contributing to the development of competitive tourism products, gastronomic brands, and sustainable tourism experiences has been further developed.

Knowledge relating to smart and sustainable tourism destinations has been extended by providing an integrated perspective on the interplay between digital transformation, sustainable management, and stakeholder participation in the development of tourism areas.

A comprehensive conceptual framework linking consumer behaviour, innovation, cultural identity, and sustainable development has been developed,

providing thematic coherence across the candidate's research and contributing to the establishment of a clearly identifiable research profile.

Applied Scientific Contributions

Models, methodological approaches, and analytical tools have been developed for assessing consumer attitudes towards innovation, with potential application in the management of restaurant and tourism enterprises.

Practical approaches to the implementation of innovations in restaurant management and hospitality have been formulated, taking into account both the specific characteristics of service provision and the distinctive features of different consumer segments.

Solutions have been proposed for the development and positioning of tourism products based on local cultural and gastronomic heritage, contributing to the strengthening of regional identity and enhancing the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

Recommendations have been formulated for the strategic development and profiling of tourism destinations, based on the principles of smart governance, sustainable development, and the effective utilisation of local resource potential.

In summary, I consider that the contributions presented are predominantly characterised by the advancement and further development of existing scientific knowledge, the conceptualisation of interrelationships, and the adaptation of theoretical propositions to specific issues in tourism, combined with significant applied scientific results.

For the competition, Dr Hristina Filipova has reported a total of 17 citations, corresponding to 225 points under the national evaluation criteria, thereby substantially exceeding the minimum requirements for the academic position. The evidence presented indicates a good level of academic visibility and recognition of the candidate's research. Particularly noteworthy are the citations in publications indexed in internationally recognised databases, indicating that elements of the candidate's research have reached an international academic audience.

7. Participation in Research Projects

The candidate's participation in seven university-funded and two international research projects deserves positive recognition, as it demonstrates sustained and productive research activity. The thematic scope of these projects is directly aligned with the academic speciality of the competition. A substantial proportion of the project results have been disseminated through research publications.

Overall, the results presented are significant, well-substantiated, and sufficient in terms of scope, content, and academic visibility to support a positive evaluation of the candidate's research activity.

8. Teaching activity

Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, has approximately 12 years of teaching experience at the College of Tourism and the University of Economics – Varna. The submitted record of her teaching workload indicates that Dr Filipova has delivered lectures and seminars at the Professional Bachelor's and Bachelor's degree levels in courses such as Social Psychology in Tourism, Human Resource Management, Restaurant Management, and Comparative Economic Systems. In addition, Dr Filipova has delivered lectures and seminars in English under the Erasmus programme at the University of Economics – Varna. It is particularly noteworthy that between 2023 and 2025 she also delivered short-term lecture courses at universities abroad in France, Romania, and India.

Her contribution to the development of fourteen course syllabi and one teaching handbook also deserves positive recognition. Her active engagement with students is equally commendable, as evidenced by her supervision of dozens of Bachelor's and Master's degree students in the preparation of their final theses, her responsibilities within the university tutoring system, her mentoring of students participating in the international BIP programme in Brand Management, BrandY, in Annecy, France, in 2025, as well as her involvement in student research forums.

Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, has also demonstrated a sustained commitment to her own continuing professional development. This is evidenced by her participation in seven training courses and seminars.

In summary, the teaching activity of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, fully meets, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, the requirements for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor and provides convincing evidence of the candidate's successful contribution to the education and professional preparation of future specialists for the tourism sector.

9. Plagiarism

No instances of plagiarism, duplication of works previously used for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD), or other breaches of academic ethics have been identified in the submitted research publications.

10. Questions and Critical Remarks

I have no critical comments regarding the research and teaching activities of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD. I would, however, make a recommendation concerning her future research: to continue expanding her publication activity in academic outlets abstracted and indexed in internationally recognised databases, and to strengthen her participation in academic forums both in Bulgaria and abroad.

11. Conclusion

My review of the submitted documentation and research output, together with my personal impressions of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Filipova, PhD, provide a sound basis for concluding that the candidate fully meets the requirements of the Act

on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the internal regulations of the University of Economics – Varna governing appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor. Her research output demonstrates a clear thematic focus, academic maturity, and effective integration of theory and practice, while her teaching and research project activities further strengthen her overall academic profile. The results presented provide convincing evidence of her readiness to assume the academic position of Associate Professor.

In view of the above, I give an unequivocally positive assessment and confidently recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury support the candidature of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD, for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 3.9 Tourism, academic speciality “Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in Restaurant Management, Consumer Behaviour)”.

12 August 2026

Respectfully,
(Assoc. Prof. Georgina Lukanova, PhD)

Заличена информация съгласно
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