



OPINION

in reference to a competition for 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)"

1. General information

Prepared by: Prof. Stoyan Petkov Marinov, PhD, Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism (EOT) in the University of Economics-Varna (UE-Varna), area of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional trend 3.9 Tourism, scientific specialty "Economics and management (Tourism)".

This opinion was prepared on the basis of Order No. RD 06-99/04.06.2026 of the Rector of UE-Varna for the appointment of the Scientific Jury and the Minutes of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury for the election of the chairman and the appointment of reviewers for the competition dated 16.07.2026.

The review is made in compliance with the requirements of the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for applying it (RALDASRB) and the Regulations for academic staff development (RASD) at the UE-Varna.

2. Information about the competition

The competition for the academic position of "associate professor" was announced in the State Gazette No. 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 the restaurant industry, Consumer Behavior)" for the needs of the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism at the UE-Varna

3. Candidates in the competition

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition – Chief Asst. Prof. Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD from the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism at the UE-Varna

The set of materials and documents submitted by the candidate is in accordance with LDASRB, RALDASRB and RASD in UE-Varna.

Chief Asst. Prof. Hristina Filipova, PhD meets the minimum national requirements for the academic position of "associate professor" in the area of higher education for which the competition was announced, according to art. 2b, item 2 and 3 from LDASRB. The candidate meets also the additional qualitative requirements of UE-Varna in art. 2b, item 5 of LDASRB and meets the requirements in art. 101 in RASD in UE-Varna

4. Data on candidate

Hristina Filipova obtained her secondary education at the IV Language High School "Frédéric Joliot-Curie", Varna in the period 2003-2007. In 2011, she graduated

from the UE-Varna with a Bachelor's degree in International Economic Relations. In the period 2011-2012, she successively obtained a Master's degree in Management and Marketing (Management des Organisations parcours Marketing) and a Master's degree in Management of Taste and Luxury, Research Profile (Économie et Gestion du Goût et du Luxe, profil: recherche) at the Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne in France. In 2020, she acquired the ESG PhD in the professional field 3.9. "Tourism" after defending a dissertation on the topic "Marketing strategies for offering souvenirs according to the cultural differences of tourists".

Hristina Filipova has improved her teaching qualifications by participating in seven practical courses and webinars on current topics such as: "Techniques for writing research papers"; "Intellectual property, copyright and plagiarism: regulatory framework and case law"; "Sustainable high-end tourism"; "Digital transformation and artificial intelligence in higher education with Google for Education"; "Teaching in the era of Gen Z and Alpha: methods that work".

From 2014 to 2020, Hristina Filipova is a part-time lecturer at the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism at the UE-Varna and the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism, and from February 2021 holds the academic position of "Chief Assistant" in the Department of Tourism of the College of Tourism. Hristina Filipova's professional profile also includes practical management experience: Manager of International Clients at "International Admission Services" Ltd. and owner/manager of the company "Infinity Escape" Ltd.

Hristina Filipova is fluent in French and English. She has been 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 "My Dissertation in 180 Seconds".

The results achieved by Hristina Filipova outline consistent academic development, combined with international exposure and good connection with tourism practice

5. Outline of research work

To participate in the competition, Chief Asst. Prof Hristina Filipova, PhD presents a total of 30 publications according to the attached list. The scientific works presented include: 1 independent monograph - habilitation thesis; 9 monographs and studies; 8 scientific articles, 11 scientific reports and 1 textbook. Eight of the works are independent, and 22 are co-authored. 22 of the publications are in English. The publications on the dissertation are separated and are not included again in the production evaluated under the competition

The works accepted for review have a total volume of 778 printed pages of personal participation of the candidate by types, shown in Table 1.

Table No. 1

Type and volume of the reviewed publications

Type of publication	Number	Number of Pages	Share of volume
Monographies and studies	10	463	59,7%
Scientific articles	8	113	14,5%
Scientific reports	11	105	13,5%
Textbook	1	96	12,3%
Total	30	778	100,0%



In structural terms, in terms of number of pages, monographs and studies prevail with a share of 59.7%, followed by articles with a total share of 14.5%.

The central place is occupied by the independent habilitation thesis "Influence of consumer behavior in the integration of innovations in the restaurant business" with a volume of 256 pages, which does not repeat publications for the acquisition of PhD. The thesis was discussed in the primary unit - Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism at the UE-Varna, was reviewed by two habilitation persons and was published in the University Publishing House "Science and Economics" of the UE-Varna in 2026. The monograph is directly related to the profile of the competition and examines a current scientific and applied problem: how changes in consumer behavior affect the choice, acceptance and implementation of innovations in the restaurant business. The thesis is distinguished by a logical structure, a broad theoretical basis, an analysis of the current state of the sector and its own empirical tools. As a significant result, I evaluate the author's developed model for integrating innovations in the restaurant industry, which places the consumer in an active role throughout the individual stages of the process. The independent nature, volume, thematic integrity and contributions of the monograph argue for the high quality of a habilitation work, different from a dissertation.

The remaining scientific production is thematically related and at the same time sufficiently diverse. It extends Filipova's research to local brands in the restaurant industry and gastronomic heritage, intelligent and sustainable tourist destinations, robotization and digital transformation in tourism, socio-psychological dimensions of tourist consumer behavior and territorial tourism development. There are 5 publications in authoritative international journals, indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, which testifies to the international visibility of the achieved scientific results.

The results presented by Chief Asst. Prof. Hristina Filipova publications in quantitative, structural and content terms fully meet the requirements of LDASRB, RALDASRB, as well as art. 101, item 2 from RASD in UE-Varna.

6. Identifying contributions in the candidate's research work

After reviewing the presented works, I accept the contributions declared by Chief Asst. Prof Hristina Filipova, PhD as real, original and provable in the publication production. They can be summarized in three interrelated areas:

First – restaurant industry and local gastronomic identity.

The theoretical characteristics of the restaurant industry and the restaurant product have been enriched; national and international classifications and structural characteristics of the sector have been systematized; the role of local brands, traditional foods and food souvenirs as carriers of cultural and gastronomic heritage has been deduced. The analyses of the restaurant sector in Bulgaria and Varna and the guidelines for the development of products with ethnocultural regional identity are useful for practice.

Publications: 5, 9, 10, 22, 27, 30, 31, 34

Second – consumer behavior in tourism and the restaurant industry.

The theory of consumer behavior formation has been upgraded and the process of consumer acceptance of technological, product and organizational innovations in tourism has been studied. A toolkit for assessing consumer attitudes, opinions and perceptions has been developed and tested - modern changes in the behavior of restaurant customers have been systematized and consumer profiles by generations (BB, X, Y, Z) have been developed. A first-of-its-kind empirical study in the specialized literature has been carried out among the residents of the city of Varna by generations - BB, X, Y and Z regarding the restaurant product and the innovations integrated into it.

The research has applicability in segmentation, product design, tourism profiling of municipalities and management decisions in restaurant enterprises.

Publications: 5, 6, 8, 10, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31

Third – innovations, smart destinations and sustainable development.

A reasoned classification of innovations in the restaurant industry is proposed and an original, universally applicable model for their integration with active consumer participation is developed. Theoretical statements regarding smart tourist destinations, digital transformation and sustainable management in tourism are developed. Good practices for smart cities are systematized and concepts for themed restaurants are developed, based on empirical research into the attitudes of different generations.

Publications: 5, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 32

The theoretical-methodological and practical-applied contributions of Chief Asst. Prof. Hristina Filipova, PhD correspond to the scientific specialty of the competition and demonstrate the ability to independently formulate and solve scientific-applied tasks. A strong point is the combination of knowledge from the general theory of tourism, restaurant management, marketing, social psychology and intercultural communication.

Hristina Filipova presents evidence of 17 citations of 4 of her publications. Citations of the candidate's works are documented, rated with 225 points, exceeding four times the required value of 50 points, according to the indicator from group "D" of the Minimum State Requirements. Particularly visible are the publications dedicated to attitudes towards service robots in tourism and hospitality, cited in international scientific journals, indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. Which is convincing evidence of the recognizability and relevance of the candidate's research

7. Participation in research projects and scientific events.

Hristina Filipova participates in 7 intra-university and 2 international scientific and educational projects. Among them are projects for innovative technologies in the hotel industry, tourism profiling of municipalities, professional realization of tourism students, monitoring of the sustainable development of a maritime destination and development of an intelligent tourist destination, as well as the international project initiatives in the field of cultural heritage PESCAVET and Cultural BEES (Creating cultural heritage businesses through hybrid learning models & hands-on curricula across borders).

The project activity is distinguished by the achieved concrete results - published monographs, developed research models, prepared electronic resources and educational products.



8. Teaching work

The teaching and learning activities of Chief Asst. Prof. Hristina Filipova, PhD are diverse and directly related to the profile of the competition. She gives lectures and exercises in the disciplines "Restaurant Management", "Social Psychology in Tourism", "Human Resources Management in Tourism", "Marketing and Business Communications in Tourism", "Animation in Tourism", "Introduction to Tourism", as well as disciplines in English. She works with students in the "Professional Bachelor", "Bachelor" and "Master" programs, supervises diploma theses and master's theses, participates in student scientific sessions and is a tutor and mentor of student teams. Hristina Filipova also works as a part-time lecturer in the discipline "Personnel Assessment" in the qualification in "Human Resources Management" at the Center for Continuing Education (CPE) at the UE-Varna. She is a lecturer in the short-term intensive program (BIP) "Dukenet Spring Marketing Simulation" at the UE-Varna.

International teaching mobilities at the Lycée des Métiers Gastronomie-Hôtellerie-Tourismes Georges-Frêche Montpellier (Montpellier, France) and Universitatea "Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu, (Sibiu, Romania), as well as conducting online lectures to students from AI Universal University – Mumbai and teaching in the international BIP program BrandY at the Université Savoie Mont Blanc (Annecy, France) argue for the international teaching profile of Hristina Filipova.

The presented independent teaching aid and participation in the development and updating of a significant number of curricula prove the high teaching and methodological competence of the candidate.

During the academic year 2025/2026, Chief Asst. Prof. Filipova has a full-time teaching workload of over 400 hours at the College of Tourism-Varna.

9. Plagiarism

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

10. Critical notes and questions to the candidate

I have known Chief Asst. Prof. Filipova since 2018 as a doctoral student in the specialty "Tourism" at the UE-Varna, and subsequently as a lecturer at the College of Tourism and in the Department of Tourism Management at the UE-Varna. Hristina Filipova possesses the qualities of an intelligent, proactive, strong-willed, ideological and competent specialist-lecturer.

The reviewed scientific works do not give grounds for significant critical remarks. I recommend Chief Asst. Prof. to expand the scope of her scientific research in the field of economic aspects of the restaurant industry in Bulgaria.

11. Conclusion

According to the submitted documents and the achieved scientific and teaching results, Chief Asst. Prof. Filipova meets the requirements of the LDASRB and of the

RALDASRB as well the requirements of the RASD in UE-Varna for holding the position of "Associate professor", namely:

She has obtained the educational and scientific PhD degree.

For 5 years she has held the academic position of "Chief assistant" at the College of Tourism-Varna. She has been and is a specialist in practice and has proven achievements in the field of tourism.

30 publications have been submitted and accepted for evaluation, including a habilitation thesis in the form of an independent monograph.

17 citations of the candidate's works by other authors have been documented.

She teaches classes in academic disciplines in the "professional bachelor" program at the College of Tourism at the UE-Varna, which are directly related to the direction of the competition.

Covers the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3, respectively the requirements under Art. 2.b, para. 5 of the LDASRB. The candidate declares a total of 694.7 points out of a required minimum of 400 points with performance on the indicators from all groups (group A - achieved 50 points out of a required 50 points; group B - achieved 100 points out of a required 100 points; group D - achieved 319.7 points out of a required 200 points; group E - achieved 225 points out of a required 50 points). Fulfills the quantitative requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate professor" at the UE-Varna declaring on group G (independent habilitation work) - 100 points out of a required 100 points; on group H (publications in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in Scopus and Web of Science) -292 points with 55 points required and in group I (participation in scientific and educational projects) - 95 points with 15 points required.

There is no plagiarism proven in the scientific works according to the established procedure.

The achievements of Chief Asst. Prof. Hristina Filipova in scientific, applied, educational and pedagogical activities are grounds for me to give her a positive assessment and to propose her for election to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism at the UE-Varna in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.9. Tourism, scientific specialty: "Economics and Management (Tourism - Innovations in the Restaurant Industry, Consumer Behavior)"

25.07. 2026
Varna

Reviewer:
Prof. Stoyan Marinov, PhD

Заличена информация съгласно
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679



Ex. No. PA20-1282/27.07.2026

STATEMENT

Regarding the competition for 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)"

1. General information

The opinion was prepared by: Assoc. Prof. Genka Ivanova Rafailova, PhD, Department of Foreign Languages and Communication in Tourism at the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna, field of higher education 3. "Social, Economic and Legal Sciences", professional field 3.9 "Tourism", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)".

This statement has been prepared based on Order No **RD 06-99/04.06.2026**, of the Rector of the University of Economics-Varna for the appointment of a scientific jury and the Report of the first meeting of the scientific jury for the election of a chairman and reviewers of the competition, held on **16.07.2026**.

The Statement has been developed in accordance with the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria (ASDARB) and the Regulations for its Implementation (RIASDARB), and the Rules for Academic Growth at the University of Economics-Varna (PRAS).

2. Information about the competition

The competition was announced in the State Gazette No. 44 /14.05.2026 for the needs of the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna, 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)".

3. Candidate for the competition

Chief Assistant Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD, at the Department of Tourism in the College of Tourism – Varna at the University of Economics – Varna has submitted documents for participation in the competition and is the only candidate. She participates in the competition with documents and materials in accordance with ASDARB and RIASDARB, and the Rules for Academic Growth at the University of Economics-Varna (PRAS).

The candidate fulfills the minimum national requirements for Associate Professor in the field of higher education, in which the competition has been announced according Art.2b, paragraphs 2 and 3, of ASDARB, **with a minimum threshold of 400 scores, she achieves a total 694,7 scores**. Chief Assistant Hristina Filipova, PhD, meets the requirements in Art. 101 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics-Varna (PRAS) and covers the additional quantitative requirements of the University of



Economics-Varna under Art. 26, paragraph 5 of the ASDARB. The candidate must achieve a **minimum score of 170 but has reported a score of 487.**

• **Data about the candidate** (personal characteristics):

Chief. Assist. Prof. Hristina Filipova, PhD, was born in 1988 in Varna, where she completed her secondary education at the IV Foreign Language High School "Frédéric Joliot-Curie" with an emphasis on French. She subsequently earned the following educational degrees:

- **Bachelor's Degree:** International Economic Relations (2011), University of Economics – Varna.
- **Master 1 Degree:** *Management des Organisations, parcours Marketing* (Management, specialization in Marketing) (2012), Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France.
- **Master 2 Degree:** *Économie et Gestion du Goût et du Luxe, profil: recherche* (Management of Taste and Luxury, Research Profile) (2013), Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France.
- **Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" (PhD):** Economics and Management (Tourism) (2020), University of Economics – Varna.

The candidate works in the field of education and business:

- International Client Manager: International Admission Services Ltd. (2015–2017);
- Owner and Manager: Infinity Escape Varna (2016–present);
- Part-time Assistant Professor: College of Tourism – Varna and Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism (EOT) at UE–Varna (2014–2021);
- Chief Assistant Professor: College of Tourism – Varna, UE–Varna (2021–present).

4. Description of scientific papers

The candidate participates in the competition with **29 publications** as per the submitted list, totaling 682 pages. The presented works include: **1 monograph** (habilitation thesis, 256 pages, reviewed by 2 habilitated experts); **3 co-authored monographs**; **6 study papers** (co-authored; 6 in English, 5 indexed in Scopus); **8 articles** (6 co-authored; 7 in English, 1 in French); **11 scientific papers presented at conferences** (7 co-authored; 7 in English, 1 in French, 3 in Bulgarian; all peer-reviewed).

The publications address current topics and issues related to the development of tourism in Bulgaria and worldwide—specifically innovations in the restaurant industry, consumer behavior of hotel and restaurant guests, smart tourism destinations, smart cities, and related areas. The candidate's scientific work demonstrates high research quality, featuring both theoretical and practical contributions. The language and style are of a high academic standard.

5. Identification of contributions

An examination of the research activity and publications of Chief Assist. Prof. Hristina Filipova, PhD, highlights contributions in the following areas:



- **Consumer Behavior:** Comprehensive and in-depth research in Bulgarian specialized literature focused on consumer behavior (in general, in tourism, and in the restaurant industry); clarification of the interrelationship between consumer behavior and the implementation of innovations in the restaurant business from both scientific and practical perspectives; development of a socio-psychological profile of restaurant customers, including representatives of different generations.
- **Innovations in Tourism (specifically Hospitality and Restaurant Business):** Detailed and wide-ranging research on innovations in the restaurant industry, their role, and classification; creation of an original author's model for integrating innovations into the restaurant business with the active participation of the consumer (possessing both scientific and practical application value).
- **Restaurant Industry:** Deep and comprehensive study of the restaurant sector in Bulgaria and Varna; formulation of an original definition of the restaurant industry as an economic and social activity with an emphasis on customer experience; clarification of the structure of the restaurant product; detailed investigation into the relationship between restaurant product components and modern consumer demands; high-quality structuring of statistical data regarding the restaurant industry in Varna and Bulgaria.
- **Local Brands:** Definition of a local brand and clarification of its essence and significance for local economics and communities; in-depth presentation of the essence, role, and importance of local brands in the restaurant sector and their relationship with national cultural and gastronomic heritage; exploration of the role of souvenirs in building and maintaining local brands.

6. Participation in scientific projects and scientific forums

The candidate has participated in **over 20 scientific events**, including major conferences ("Tourism Beyond Expectations" organized by the EOT Department at UE–Varna; "Contemporary Tourism – Rethinking Opportunities and Guidelines for Its Development" and "Tourism and Innovations" organized by the College of Tourism – Varna; "Innovative Regenerative Tourism – Theory and Good Practices" at the Agricultural University – Plovdiv; "Tourism, Business, Education" at BSU; "Contemporary Tourism – Traditions and Innovations" organized by the Geography of Tourism Department at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", among others), forums such as the "Black Sea Tourism Forum", as well as roundtables and panel discussions.

Chief Assist. Prof. Hristina Filipova, PhD, has served as an expert/consultant in **6 research projects** funded by the state targeted subsidy for scientific activity, and **3 international projects**.

7. Teaching work

Chief Assist. Prof. Hristina Filipova, PhD, has been teaching at the College of Tourism – Varna, UE–Varna since 2014 - initially as a part-time assistant and from the 2021/2022 to 2025/2026 academic years as a Chief Assistant Professor, recording a total classroom teaching load of 904 hours over the last two academic years.



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- **Core Courses Taught:** Restaurant Industry, Social Psychology, Human Resource Management, Marketing Communications, and others.
- **Courses Taught in English:** International Political Economy and Comparative Economic Systems.
- **Erasmus+ Courses Taught:** Marketing of Luxury Products and Intercultural Communication.

The candidate actively participates in organizing student scientific sessions, supporting students in conducting events, competing, and preparing course projects. She has twice led student teams in the "Creative Workshop for Young Entrepreneurs in Tourism" competition and accompanied students participating in the international BIP brand management program *BrandY* in Annecy, France. She has also conducted mobility teaching activities under the Erasmus+ program at universities and colleges in France, Romania, and other countries.

Additionally, she has supervised numerous Bachelor's and Master's theses in the "Tourism" and "International Tourism" programs within the EOT Department at UE-Varna, and authored 1 study guide/teaching handbook in the *Restaurant Industry*.

8. Plagiarism

The candidate participates in the competition with publications that have undergone a plagiarism check and do not indicate any inappropriate use of others' works and data.

9. Questions, critical remarks

The research and teaching activities of the candidate, Chief Assistant Hristina Filipova, PhD, are distinguished by high levels of achievement and significance, both quantitatively and qualitatively. However, the following recommendation may be extended:

1. To develop and publish a standalone **textbook** for one of the core courses she teaches, allowing her to share her research insights and expertise with a broader academic audience over the long term.

This recommendation aims only to support her academic advancement and enhance her teaching practice.

10. Conclusion

The candidate, Chief Assistant Hristina Filipova, PhD, meets all regulatory requirements according to the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Implementation, as well as the internal rules of the University of Economics-Varna according to the PRAS for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in quantitative and qualitative terms. She holds a PhD, works as an Assistant and Chief Assistant at the College of Tourism - Varna at the University of Economics - Varna, and has been teaching for nearly 10 years in disciplines related to the competition, actively participates in research and applied projects, and makes significant contributions to the development of education and scientific work in tourism in Bulgaria.

Based on the above facts, I have every reason to propose that Chief Assistant Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD be elected to the academic position of Associate Professor at the



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Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism - Varna at the University of Economics - Varna in the field of higher education 3. "Social, Economic and Legal Sciences", professional field 3.9 "Tourism", scientific specialty "Economics and Management Innovations in the Restaurant Industry, Consumer Behavior).

23.07.2026
Varna

Prepared Statement
/Assoc. Prof. Genka Rafailova, PhD/

Заличена информация съгласно
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679

**УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ЗА НАЦИОНАЛНО И СВЕТОВНО СТОПАНСТВО****OPINION**

By: Prof. Elenita Kirilova Velikova, PhD
University of National and World Economy, Department of Tourism Economics
Scientific Specialty: "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

Subject: Competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in Restaurant Management, Consumer Behaviour)", professional field 3.9. Tourism, area of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, at the University of Economics – Varna, announced in the State Gazette, Issue No. 44/14 May 2026, for the needs of the Department of Tourism at the College of Tourism – Varna, University of Economics – Varna.

This review has been prepared pursuant to Art. 4, para. 8 of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and Art. 107, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, in connection with the decision of the scientific jury appointed by Order No. RD 06-99/04.06.2026 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna for conducting a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor.

1. Information about the competition

The competition for the academic position of Associate Professor was announced in area 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 Behaviour)", with the announcement published in the State Gazette, Issue No. 44/14 May 2026. There is one candidate participating in the competition – Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD, lecturer at the Department of Tourism, College of Tourism – Varna, University of Economics – Varna.

At the first meeting of the scientific jury, it was established that the candidate meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor in the respective professional field, as well as the quantitative requirements of the University of Economics – Varna. Therefore, she was admitted to the evaluation stage of the competition.

2. Brief Information about the Candidate in the Competition

Based on the documents submitted for the competition, it may be concluded that the candidate, Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD, meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor in area of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, within the meaning of Art. 2b, paras. 2 and 3 of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act

(DASRBA), as well as the additional quantitative requirements of the University of Economics – Varna pursuant to Art. 2b, para. 5 of the DASRBA. The submitted statements concerning the candidate's scientific output, citations, and point-based compliance demonstrate that the required minimum thresholds for the respective groups of indicators have been met and, in some cases, substantially exceeded. Under indicator group "G", the candidate reports 319.7 points, while under the additional University of Economics – Varna indicators in group "H", she reports 292 points, against a required minimum of 55 points. The independently authored habilitation thesis provides the required 100 points under the relevant group of indicators.

Hristina Filipova holds the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD) in professional field 3.9. Tourism, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)", awarded by the University of Economics – Varna in 2020. Her doctoral dissertation is entitled "Marketing Strategies for Offering Souvenirs in Accordance with Tourists' Cultural Differences." Since February 2021, she has held the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor at the Department of Tourism, College of Tourism – Varna, University of Economics – Varna.

The candidate's research interests focus on restaurant management, consumer behaviour, social psychology, cultural heritage, intercultural communication, human resource management, and luxury product marketing. The scientific output submitted for the competition demonstrates a consistent development primarily in the areas of innovations in restaurant and hotel management, consumer attitudes and behaviour, technological innovations and robotisation, local brands and gastronomic heritage, as well as the smart and sustainable development of tourism destinations. These thematic areas correspond directly to the profile of the announced competition and are reflected both in the independently authored habilitation thesis and in the other scientific publications and applied research submitted for evaluation.

3. Description of the Scientific Works

The scientific works submitted by the candidate are characterised by quantitative, structural, and substantive completeness and reflect consistent academic development within professional field 3.9. Tourism. A total of 30 scientific works, amounting to 778 standard pages, excluding the publications related to the doctoral dissertation, have been submitted for participation in the competition. The scientific output includes an independently authored habilitation thesis – a monograph, studies, scientific articles and conference papers, contributions to collective monographic studies, and one teaching aid. Some of the publications have appeared in international academic outlets and in journals referenced and indexed in the international databases Scopus and Web of Science.

The principal habilitation work is the independently authored monograph "The Influence of Consumer Behaviour on the Integration of Innovations in the Restaurant Business", published in 2026 by the University Publishing House "Science and Economics", with a total length of 256 pages. The study is directly related to the profile of the competition and examines the interrelationship between three major areas of research – restaurant management, consumer behaviour, and innovation.

In terms of content, the candidate's scientific output is primarily focused on restaurant management, consumer behaviour, and innovation in tourism, complemented by research on technological innovations and robotisation, local brands and gastronomic

heritage, cultural and regional identity, and the sustainable and smart development of tourism destinations. There is a clear thematic correspondence between the candidate's scientific work and the profile of the present competition.

The scientific works combine theoretical and empirical approaches. In the habilitation thesis, the theoretical analysis is complemented by an empirical study among consumers, expert interviews, and quantitative and qualitative methods for processing and interpreting the results. The research methodology employed is appropriate to the objectives set and enables the formulation of both theoretical conclusions and practically applicable solutions.

The scientific works reviewed are written in appropriate academic language and employ specialised terminology relevant to the issues under investigation. The presence of publications in foreign languages and in international academic journals demonstrates the candidate's ability to present the results of her research within the international academic community as well.

4. Synthesised Evaluation of the Main Scientific and Applied Scientific Contributions

The analysis of the scientific works submitted for participation in the competition and the accompanying evidence presents Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD as a researcher with consistently developed scientific interests in the fields of restaurant management, consumer behaviour, and innovation in tourism. In her scientific output, these core areas are complemented by research on technological innovations and robotisation in tourism services, local brands and gastronomic heritage, smart and sustainable tourism destinations, as well as the role of local communities and cultural identity in shaping the tourism product. On this basis, I consider the scientific and applied scientific contributions claimed by the candidate to be substantiated by the scientific output submitted and to possess both theoretical significance and clearly expressed practical applicability.

The candidate's main contributions may be synthesised as follows:

- **Further development and systematisation of theoretical concepts in the field of restaurant management and the restaurant product.** The specific characteristics of restaurant management as an economic and social activity, the structure and distinctive features of the restaurant product, and the relationship between its tangible and intangible components and the consumer experience have been clarified. The current state, structural characteristics, and development trends of the restaurant sector in Bulgaria and in the city of Varna have been analysed. This line of research also includes studies of local brands, traditional foods, and food souvenirs as carriers of local, cultural, and gastronomic identity.
- **Enrichment of research on consumer behaviour in restaurant management and tourism.** Contemporary changes in consumer behaviour have been systematised, and profiles of the BB, X, Y, and Z generations have been developed with a view to identifying differences in their expectations, preferences, and attitudes. Attitudes towards technological and sustainability-related innovations have been examined, including the use of artificial intelligence and robots in tourism and hospitality. The issue of the influence of cultural differences on tourist behaviour has also been further developed through the application of Hofstede's model and through analysis of the relationship between consumer behaviour, cultural heritage, and local identity.
- **Development of the scientific discourse on innovation and the elaboration of**

applicable models and solutions. Different types of innovation in restaurant management have been systematised and classified, including conceptual, product, process, organisational, marketing, technological, digital, sustainability-related, and socially responsible innovations. An original model for integrating innovations in restaurant management has been developed, with an emphasis on the active role of the consumer. Based on the empirical results, practical solutions have been formulated for introducing innovations into the culinary product, the physical environment, service delivery, and atmosphere, as well as conceptual proposals for the development of a themed restaurant in the city of Varna.

- **Extension of the research towards the sustainable and smart development of tourism destinations and local communities.** Models, practices, and approaches related to the development of smart tourism destinations and cities, sustainable management, digital transformation, and enhanced competitiveness have been analysed and systematised. Consumer and local community attitudes towards the tourism profiling of municipalities have been examined, and practices related to sustainable and regenerative tourism, the preservation and valorisation of cultural heritage, and support for local communities have been identified.

In my assessment, the scientific and applied scientific contributions are clearly identifiable and traceable within the scientific output submitted. The candidate's individual contribution is particularly evident in the habilitation thesis, in which the theoretical concepts relating to restaurant management, consumer behaviour, and innovation are further developed, an original model for the integration of innovations is proposed, and an independent empirical study is conducted. For the co-authored works, declarations of co-authorship have been submitted, further confirming the candidate's participation in the respective publications.

The submitted citation report demonstrates the scientific impact of some of the candidate's publications in internationally refereed and indexed academic outlets. Particularly notable is the citation impact of the publication "Customer Attitudes Toward Robots in Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality: A Conceptual Framework", as well as of publications in the fields of smart and sustainable tourism destinations and urban sustainability. This may be regarded as an indicator of the international visibility and recognition of part of the candidate's scientific results.

5. Participation in Research Projects and Scientific Forums

The materials submitted demonstrate the active involvement of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD in research projects and scientific activities thematically related to the main areas of her academic profile. Her documented participation includes the university research projects "Application of Innovative Technologies in Hotel Services," "Prerequisites for the Professional Realisation of Tourism Students," "Monitoring the Sustainable Development of a Seaside Tourism Destination," and "Development of a Smart Tourism Destination 2030 (the Case of Varna Municipality)." For some of these projects, collective monographic studies involving the candidate have been presented as specific research outputs.

The candidate has also participated in international and national project initiatives, including PESCAVET – Professionals' Innovation Training for Pesca-Tourism Activities, Cultural BEES, "Creative Industries – a Driver of Innovation in Tourism," and a project

focused on the application of traditional Bulgarian foods in culinary arts for the development of regenerative tourism. Within PESCAVET, the candidate is listed as a consultant, while in the other projects she participated as a member of the project team.

The candidate's scientific activity is also reflected in publications in proceedings of national and international scientific conferences, as well as in participation in educational and academic formats of an international nature. The materials submitted demonstrate a consistent link between project activities, scientific research, and publication outputs, which further contributes positively to the candidate's overall academic profile.

6. Teaching Activities – Quantitative and Qualitative Assessment

The teaching activities of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD are characterised by consistent experience in educating students in the field of tourism. The candidate has delivered lectures and practical classes in courses such as "Restaurant Management," "Marketing and Business Communications in Tourism," "Human Resource Management in Tourism," "Social Psychology in Tourism," and "Contemporary Nutrition and Culinary Culture," as well as practical classes in "Introduction to Tourism."

She has also been actively involved in the development of course syllabi in subjects related to the profile of the competition, including "Restaurant Management," "Social Psychology in Tourism," "Tourism Marketing," "Customer Care," and "Human Resource Management in Tourism." Her teaching activities are further supported by the independently authored teaching aid "Restaurant Management," which establishes a direct link between the candidate's scientific specialisation and the educational process.

The submitted materials also demonstrate participation in educational formats beyond traditional classroom teaching, including as a trainer of managerial and expert staff, a part-time lecturer in continuing professional training, and a lecturer in the international short-term intensive programme Dukenet Spring Marketing Simulation in 2026.

The circumstances outlined above provide sufficient grounds for me to conclude that the candidate's teaching activities are thematically aligned with her scientific interests and the profile of the competition and demonstrate a combination of academic expertise, curriculum development, and participation in practical and international educational formats.

7. Plagiarism

Based on the declarations and materials submitted, no evidence has been identified of breaches of academic ethics or improper use of the scientific works of others. In the case of co-authored publications, the individual authorial contribution has been certified through declarations of co-authorship, and the candidate has declared compliance with copyright requirements and proper citation of the sources used. The scientific works submitted are consistent with the principles of good scientific practice.

8. Questions and Critical Remarks to the Candidate

I have no substantial critical remarks regarding the materials and scientific output submitted for the competition. As a recommendation for the candidate's future academic development, further expansion of her publication activity in refereed and indexed international journals may be encouraged, together with a deeper exploration of innovation in restaurant management and consumer behaviour within a broader territorial and comparative context.

9. Conclusion

Based on the overall assessment of the candidate's research, applied scientific, and teaching activities, the established scientific and applied scientific contributions, her participation in research and educational projects, as well as her fulfilment of the minimum national and institutional requirements, I consider that Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD meets the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Regulations for its Implementation, and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna.

The candidate possesses the necessary qualities of a university lecturer and researcher and has demonstrated contributions directly related to the scientific specialty of the competition. All of the above provides sufficient grounds for me to give my POSITIVE ASSESSMENT and to confidently support the election of Chief Assistant Professor Hristina Plamenova Filipova, PhD to the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 3.9. Tourism, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in Restaurant Management, Consumer Behaviour)", at the College of Tourism – Varna, University of Economics – Varna.

16 August 2026 / Sofia

Signature:

Заличена информация съгласно
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679

/Prof. Elenita Velikova, PhD/

OPINION

Вх. № 2220-1401 / 13.08.2026

by prof. Zlatka Gosheva Grigorova, PhD

University of Forestry – Sofia, Faculty of Ecology and Landscape
Architecture, Department of “Alternative Tourism”; Professional Field 3.9
“Tourism” (Regional Development and Tourism)

Member of the Scientific Jury in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences; professional field: 3.9. Tourism; academic specialty: Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in the Restaurant Industry, Consumer Behaviour).

Information on the competition: The competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” was announced in State Gazette, No. 44/14 May 2026, and has undergone all required levels of approval at the University of Economics – Varna. One candidate submitted an application for the announced position – Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Plamenova Filipova, who was admitted to participate in the competition by a committee pursuant to Article 105, paragraph 1 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Economics – Varna and meets the minimum national requirements stipulated in Article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Pursuant to Order No. RD 06-99/04 June 2026 of the Rector of the University, I was appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury, and pursuant to Minutes No. 1/16 July 2026, I was designated to prepare an opinion on the candidate.

1. Brief Biographical Information on the Candidate

Hristina Plamenova Filipova was born in Varna and completed her secondary education in 2007 at the IV Foreign Language High School “Frédéric Joliot-Curie”, Varna. Her educational and professional development is characterised by the systematic advancement of knowledge, skills and competencies across several interconnected fields – economics, management, marketing and tourism:

- In 2011, she obtained a Bachelor’s degree in International Economic Relations from the University of Economics – Varna.
- In 2012, she completed a Master’s programme in Management, specialising in Marketing, followed in 2013 by a second Master’s qualification in Management of Taste and Luxury, Research Track, at the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne, France.
- In 2020, she obtained the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in professional field 3.9 “Tourism”, academic specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism)”, at the University of Economics – Varna. Her doctoral dissertation, entitled “Marketing Strategies for the Offering of Souvenirs in Accordance with Tourists’ Cultural Differences”, laid the foundation for her subsequent research interests in marketing, consumer behaviour, cultural differences and tourism supply.

Prior to pursuing an academic career, Filipova acquired practical professional experience in business and management, working as a manager of international clients. Since February 2021, she has been a member of the academic staff of the College of Tourism at the University of Economics – Varna, Department of Tourism, where she currently holds the academic position of Assistant Professor.

2. Characterisation of the Candidate’s Scientific and Applied-Scientific Output

During the period 2021–2026, the research interests of Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Filipova have developed predominantly along three interconnected lines – innovation in the restaurant industry, consumer behaviour, and contemporary transformations in tourism. Her research addresses topics related to the restaurant product, consumer attitudes and behaviour, generational differences, local brands, cultural heritage and gastronomy, digitalisation, artificial intelligence and robotics, smart tourism destinations, and sustainable development.

The scholarly output of Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Plamenova Filipova is characterised by substantial volume, diversity of publication formats and a clearly defined thematic focus. For participation in the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor”, she has submitted 30 scientific and teaching-methodological works, comprising a total of 778 standard manuscript pages. Structurally, the submitted output includes one single-authored and three co-authored monographs, six studies, eight scientific articles, eleven scientific papers, and one teaching handbook.

Of the 30 works submitted for the competition, eight are single-authored and 22 are co-authored. There is also a significant international dimension to her scholarly output – nine publications were published abroad, while part of her research has appeared in publications indexed in Scopus.

The quantitative profile of her scholarly output demonstrates that it not only meets but substantially exceeds the quantitative requirements for appointment to the academic position of “Associate Professor”. Particularly noteworthy are the overall volume of publications, their substantial length, the presence of monographic research, and the combination of independent studies with publications in international and collaborative scholarly outlets.

The monograph *“The Impact of Consumer Behaviour on the Integration of Innovations in the Restaurant Business”*, comprising 256 pages, examines the relationship between consumer attitudes and the implementation of innovations in

the restaurant industry and proposes an original model for integrating consumer-oriented innovations. An empirical study conducted in Varna analyses consumer evaluations and differences among the BB, X, Y and Z generations, complemented by expert interviews and an analysis of good practices. On the basis of the findings, specific guidelines for the innovative development of the restaurant product are formulated. The study is distinguished by the topical relevance of its subject matter, a comprehensive research approach, and a strong applied orientation.

In summary, the scholarly works of Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Filipova are characterised by substantial quantitative output, diverse structural composition, thematic consistency, topical relevance and a good level of international scholarly visibility. The combination of theoretical and applied research, together with the direct relevance of a significant proportion of the publications to issues of innovation in the restaurant industry and consumer behaviour, demonstrates a clear alignment between the candidate's scholarly output and the profile of the announced competition.

3. Major Contributions to the Candidate's Scientific, Applied-Scientific and Teaching Activities

The research work of Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Filipova is characterised by thematic consistency, topical relevance and a clearly expressed practical orientation. Her principal scientific and applied-scientific contributions may be summarised in the following areas:

- In the field of the restaurant industry – a comprehensive study of the interrelationship between consumer behaviour and innovation in the restaurant business has been developed; the theoretical framework concerning the restaurant industry, the restaurant product and local brands has been further developed and enriched; the current state, structural characteristics and development trends of the restaurant sector have been analysed.

- In the field of consumer behaviour – the theoretical understanding of consumer behaviour in the restaurant industry and tourism has been further developed; consumer profiles by generation have been elaborated, and the influence of cultural differences on tourist behaviour has been examined; consumer attitudes towards technological, digital and sustainability-oriented innovations, including the use of AI and robotics in tourism, have been investigated.

- In the field of innovation – an original classification of innovations in the restaurant industry has been proposed; a model for their integration, incorporating active consumer participation, has been developed; innovative models and good practices for smart tourism destinations and smart cities have been systematised; applied concepts for the innovative development of the restaurant product have been elaborated.

The identified contributions are scientific, methodological and applied-scientific in nature, distinguished by topical relevance, original interpretation and practical applicability. Particularly significant are the original models and classifications developed by the candidate, as well as the empirical studies conducted, which contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between consumer behaviour, innovation, and the development of the restaurant industry and tourism.

4. Participation in Scientific and Research Projects

Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Filipova has demonstrated active and sustained participation in nine scientific and applied-scientific projects conducted by the University of Economics – Varna and in international projects. Five of these projects have resulted in the publication of collective monographs, one has been completed with specific scientific and applied outcomes, while three are currently in progress.

The thematic scope of the projects is directly related to the candidate's research profile, encompassing innovation, sustainable and smart development of

tourism destinations, consumer behaviour, cultural heritage and regenerative tourism. Her participation in two international projects deserves particular recognition, as these projects focus on the development of entrepreneurial competencies, the utilisation of cultural heritage, and the creation of new business models and tourism products.

I assess the candidate's participation in scientific projects as a substantial component of her research and academic activity, demonstrating her ability to work effectively in research teams and to establish meaningful links between academic research and practical implementation.

5. Assessment of the Candidate's Teaching Activity

Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Filipova has accumulated more than ten years of continuous and diverse teaching experience at the University of Economics – Varna and the Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University of Burgas. She has taught lectures and practical classes at the levels of Professional Bachelor, Bachelor and Master, including courses delivered in English.

Her work with students, supervision of undergraduate and Master's theses, tutoring activities, participation in student research initiatives, and international teaching experience in France, Romania and India are particularly noteworthy.

Overall, her teaching activity is consistent, thematically diverse and characterised by a clear international and practical orientation.

6. Plagiarism

On the basis of the submitted statements concerning publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, the statement concerning publications in journals included in the National Reference List maintained by the National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID), and the Declaration of Originality, no evidence has been identified of plagiarism, misrepresentation of research findings, or improper citation of the scholarly works of other authors.

7. Critical Remarks and Recommendations

I have no critical remarks concerning the candidate's submitted scholarly output, teaching activity or project work. The submitted scientific works demonstrate consistency, topical relevance and depth of research, as well as the sustained development of Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Filipova's academic and research profile.

CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of the candidate's submitted scholarly output, teaching record and project activity, it may be concluded that Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Plamenova Filipova possesses the requisite academic, teaching and professional qualifications for appointment to the academic position of Associate Professor.

Her overall score exceeds by a substantial margin both the minimum national requirements and the additional criteria of the University of Economics – Varna. The candidate's scholarly output, academic development and identified scientific and applied-scientific contributions provide compelling evidence of the formation of an independent and well-established research profile, with particular emphasis on innovation in the restaurant industry and consumer behaviour.

On the basis of the above, I hereby give my POSITIVE ASSESSMENT and recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury propose to the Faculty Council of the College of Tourism at the University of Economics – Varna that *Assist. Prof. Dr. Hristina Plamenova Filipova* 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; academic specialty: "Economics and Management (Tourism – Innovations in the Restaurant Industry, Consumer Behaviour)".

Date: 12.08.2026

Sofia

Me.
Prof. Zlatka Grigeva

Заличена информация съгласно
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679



Вх. № P20-1458 / 18.08.2026

О P I N I O N

From: *Prof. Dr. Preslav Mihaylov Dimitrov, International Business School (IBS) - Botevgrad, Professional field 3.9. Tourism.*

Subject: The competition announced in the State Gazette No. 44/14.05.2026 for the academic position of "**Associate Professor**" in the professional field 3.9. "Tourism", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism - Innovations in the Restaurant Industry, Consumer Behavior)"

1. Competition information

The competition is announced for the needs of the **Department of "Tourism"** at the College of Tourism – Varna, University of Economics - Varna according to the Decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Management (protocol No. 35/28.05.2026). I participate in the composition of the scientific jury of the competition according to Order No. RD 06-99/04.06.2026 of the Rector of the Varna University of Economics.

2. Brief information about the candidate in the competition

The only candidate in the competition is Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Hristina Plamenova Filipova. She completed her secondary education in the period 2003 - 2007 at the IV Language High School "Frédéric Joliot - Curie", Varna. In the period 2007 - 2011, Hristina Filipova graduated from the University of Economics - Varna "Bachelor", Specialty: "International Economic Relations". In the period 2011 - 2012, she completed the OKS "Master 1" (according to the French National Qualifications Framework) at the University of Reims Champagne - Ardennes, Reims, France, specialty "Organization Management - Marketing Direction". In 2012 and 2013, Hristina Filipova graduated from the same university and the OKS "Master 2", specialty "Economics and Management of Taste and Luxury, Research Profile". In the period 2017 - 2020, Hristina Pavlova Filipova was enrolled and trained as a doctoral student at the University of Economics - Varna, Department of "Economics and Organization of Tourism". After a successful public defense, she acquired the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education - 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, in the professional field 3.9. "Tourism", scientific specialty Economics and Management (Tourism). The topic of the dissertation is "Marketing strategies for offering souvenirs according to the cultural differences of tourists", and the scientific supervisor is Prof. Dr. Stoyan Marinov. From February 2021 - to the present, Dr. Hristina Filipova works as a chief assistant, doctor at the Department of "Tourism" at the College of Tourism - Varna at the University of Economics - Varna. Dr. Christina Filipova also has independent entrepreneurial experience in the field of tourism, as she is the owner and manager of Infinity Escape Ltd.

3. Fulfillment of the requirements for holding the academic position

In terms of fulfilling the quantitative requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the University, it is evident that the candidate significantly exceeds the required number of points (reporting 487 points). Dr. Hristina Plamenova Filipova receives 694.7 points in fulfillment of the National Minimum Requirements according to the Law on the Promotion of Higher Education and Research (Art. 2b) and the Regulations for its implementation (Art. 1a, para. 1). It can be summarized that in almost all criteria the candidate

2. **Scientific and applied scientific contributions in the field of consumer behavior :** The first part of them is related to the enrichment and further development of the theory of consumer behavior in the restaurant industry by clarifying its specificity, resulting from the complex nature of the restaurant product and the combination of material and intangible elements during its consumption. They also relate to the systematization of contemporary changes in the behavior of restaurant customers and the development of consumer profiles by generation (BB, X, Y, Z) in order to identify differences in their expectations, preferences and attitudes (Publications: No. 5, 31). The second part is aimed at studying the attitudes and consumer behavior of tourists regarding the implementation of technological or sustainable development-related innovations in the hotel industry and analyzing the possibilities for their application in the service process. Here, some of the publications are related to the development and testing of the author's conceptual model for assessing consumer preferences, attitudes and perceptions regarding the use of AI and robots in travel, hospitality and tourism (Publications: No. 6, 8, 20, 28). The third part of the publications in this main line are related to the further development of the concept of the influence of culture on tourist behavior by presenting it as a key factor in the decision-making process of tourists. A segmentation of guests according to Hofstede's model of intercultural differences and adaptation of the offered tourist product on this basis is proposed. A study and analysis of the relationship between consumer behavior in tourism, cultural heritage and local identity has been conducted with a view to creating authentic tourist products and experiences. Practices based on the concept of sustainable and regenerative tourism have also been derived, aimed at preserving, valorizing and restoring cultural heritage and supporting local communities. (Publications: No. 7, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27). A first-of-its-kind empirical study in the specialized literature among the residents of the city of Varna by generations - BB, X, Y and Z regarding the restaurant product and the innovations integrated into it was conducted, processed and analyzed. (Publications: 5). Consumer attitudes, opinions and perceptions in relation to the tourist profiling of municipalities with the aim of more complete use of the resource potential of the territories were studied and evaluated. (Publications: No. 10, 27, 33).

3. **Scientific and applied scientific contributions in the field of innovation:** Here, some of the publications are dedicated to further developing and enriching the theory by clarifying the essence and features of innovations in the restaurant industry. The author's classification of the types of innovations in the restaurant industry is proposed: conceptual, product, process (service), organizational, marketing, open, including by and for the customer, crisis, sustainable development and social responsibility, technological, digital. Each type is analyzed from theoretical and applied points of view. A universally applicable author's model for integrating innovations in the restaurant industry has been developed, emphasizing the active role of the consumer in the entire process. (Publications: 5). The scientific theory regarding smart tourist destinations, analysis and systematization of innovative models, practices and approaches for sustainable management, digital transformation and increasing competitiveness has been further developed and enriched. (Publications: No. 12, 18, 19, 20). Innovative models and good practices for the development of smart cities have been systematized for the purpose of sustainable management of the urban environment and addressing the problems of large settlements. (Publications: No. 13, 14, 32). Effective contemporary practices for implementing innovations in the restaurant industry by product elements: culinary product, material environment, service and atmosphere have also been studied and systematized. Author's concepts for building a thematic restaurant on the territory of the city of Varna have been developed based on the conducted empirical study of consumer attitudes of different generations of citizens. (Publications: 5)



vote and propose that she receive the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 3.9. "Tourism", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism - Innovations in the Restaurant Industry, Consumer Behavior).

16.08.2026,
the town of Botevgrad

Signature:
Prof. Dr. Preslav Dimitrov

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ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679