

**REVIEW**

regarding the competition for the academic position of „Professor“

Professional field of study: 3.8 Economics

Scientific specialty: "Economics and Management (Competitiveness of Enterprises in the Trade)"

**1. General information**

- Reviewer: Prof. Dancho Yankov Danchev, PhD scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Commerce)", Department of „Economics and Management of Commerce and Services“ at the University of Economics - Varna.

The basis for preparing the review is the decision of the Scientific Jury of 14.02.2025, the order of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna RD-06-184/18.12.2024, and the decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics (Minutes 18/12.12.2024).

**2. Information about the competition**

- Field of higher education: 3. Social, economic, and legal sciences;
- Professional field of study: 3.8 Economics;
- Faculty for the needs of which the competition is open: Faculty of Economics;
- Department for the needs of which the competition is announced: Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services at University of Economics -Varna;
- Number and date of the State Gazette in which the competition was announced: 100/26.11.2024.

**3. Candidate for the competition**

The only candidate for the competition for the academic position "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and management (competitiveness of enterprises in the trade)" is assoc. prof. Violeta Yaneva Dimitrova, PhD from the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services at the University of Economics - Varna.

The scientific production presented by assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD in terms of quantity and quality, corresponds to and exceeds the minimum national requirements for the academic position "Professor" in the field of higher education in which the competition was announced, according to article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), which is illustrated in the following table:

Indicators	Minimum required points by groups of indicators for the academic position "Professor" in the professional field 3.8 Economics (according to the LDASRB)	Points declared by the candidate
Dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"	50	50
Habilitation publication - monograph	100	100
<b>The sum of indicators from 4 to 10, incl.:</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>470</b>
- Published book based on a defended doctoral dissertation	75	75
- Scientific articles and papers published in scientific journals refereed and indexed in world databases	30/n	45
- Scientific articles and papers published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals	10/n	230
- Scientific studies published in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world databases	45/n	90
- Published chapter of a collective monograph	20/n	30
<b>The sum of indicators from 11 to 13, incl.:</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>370</b>
- Citations in scientific journals refereed and indexed in world databases	15	60
- Citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific peer review	10	250
- Citations in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review	5	60
<b>The sum of the indicators from 14 to the end, incl.:</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>300,67</b>
- Supervision of a successful PhD student	40/n	40
- Participation in a national scientific or educational project	15	75
- Leadership of a national scientific or educational project	30	150
- Published university textbook	40/n	14
- Published university teaching aid	20/n	21,67

The applicant fulfills the additional quantitative requirements of the University of Economics-Varna under Art. 2b, 5 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria:

<b>№</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Points for "professor"</b>	<b>Points declared by the candidate</b>
1	Scientific papers	60	173,66
2	Scientific articles and studies	115	170*
3	Publications in Scopus and/or Web of Science	30	90
4	Citations in Scopus and/or Web of Science	15	60
5	Doctoral students defended their thesis	40	40
6	Research projects (participation and/or management), <i>including for applied research</i>	15	255  90

\* the points include 1 scientific study in co-authorship and 1 individual scientific study, refereed in Scopus

According to the submitted reference-declaration, assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD has fulfilled and quantitatively significantly exceeds the minimum national quantitative requirements in general and for the individual criteria, as well as the additional requirements of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna.

#### **4. Candidate data (personal characteristics)**

The candidate in the competition for "Professor" has a diploma from the Higher Attestation Commission for the Doctor degree No. 26942/08.09.2000 and a certificate from the Higher Attestation Commission for the academic position of Associate Professor No. 22605/23.08.2004.

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD meets the requirements in Art. 118, para 2, items 1 and 2 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna (RDAS) – holds the „Ph.D“ degree and has held the academic position of „Associate professor“ for at least two academic years at the same university.

The candidate for participation in the competition has graduated from secondary education at the Mathematic High School "Dr. P. Beron" - Varna. From 1980 to 1984, she was a student at the Higher Institute of National Economy - Varna (now the University of Economics - Varna) and

completed her studies with a master's degree. After completing his higher education, she worked as an accountant at the Local industry and household services - Varna. In 1988 she entered as a full-time assistant at the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce at the University of Economics-Varna, where her professional development continued as a chief assistant (1997-2004) and as an associate professor (2004 - present). He holds certificates for participation in specializations and courses from various universities, such as the University of Delaware (USA), University of Bradford (UK), University of Huddersfield (UK), University of Surrey (UK), University of Annecy (France) and the University of Economics-Varna. She has carried out international teaching activities in English under the Erasmus and Erasmus+ programs. The main areas of scientific interests of assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD are the competition and competitiveness of trade, trade marketing and advertising, sales management and business communications.

#### 5. Description of scientific works

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD meets the requirements under art. 118, para 2, items 3-6 in connection with art. 129 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna.

The total number of publications of the candidate is 82, including 9 monographs (3 independent), 5 studies (4 independent), 20 independent scientific articles, 33 scientific reports (22 independent), 11 textbooks and teaching aids, and 4 other publications. A total of 4 publications in English are included in world-renowned databases for referencing and indexing, of which in Scopus – 2 independent scientific studies and 1 scientific paper in co-authorship, and in Web of Science – 1 independent scientific paper.

In the current competition for the academic position of "Professor" assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD participates with some of the above publications – a total of 54 issues, which are presented in the following table:

Type of scientific publications	Total (number)	Incl.	
		Single-authored publications	In refereed and indexed journals in world-renowned databases
Monographs	5	2	-
Scientific studies	3	2	2
Scientific articles	12	12	-

Scientific papers	25	12	2
Textbooks and teaching aids	6	-	-
Other publications	3	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4</b>

Twenty-eight of the works submitted for the competition are single-authored publications, including 2 monographs, 2 scientific studies, 12 scientific articles, and 12 scientific papers. In addition, the candidate has submitted another 26 collective publications in which she has participated, including 3 monographs, 1 scientific study, 13 scientific papers, 6 textbooks and teaching aids, and 3 other publications. Two of the scientific studies and 2 scientific papers are published in English and are referenced and indexed in the world-renowned databases of scientific information, Scopus and Web of Science. The majority of the remaining publications are included in several other referencing and evaluation systems, and some publications are directly related to teaching and learning activities.

For participation in the competition for "Professor" assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD has presented one of the single-authored monographs entitled "Bargaining power evolution of retail and wholesale enterprises" with a total volume of 228 pages as a basic habilitation work. The monographic work meets the requirements, as it has been published in a specialized scientific publishing house, has been discussed in a primary scientific unit, has been reviewed by two habilitated persons, solves a significant scientific and scientifically applied problem at a high modern level and does not repeat the publications for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" and for occupying the academic position of "Associate professor" (following the requirements of Art. 118, Para. 2, item 4 and Art. 129, para. 2 of the Regulations for the development of academic staff at the University of Economics-Varna).

The habilitation work is an in-depth and original scientific study that presents the author's point of view in understanding the problems in the field of bargaining power of the trade enterprises and its evolution in the context of digitalization. The focus is on studying the changes in the strength of the bargaining position of wholesale and retail enterprises as buyers to suppliers, the sources of power, the means, and the results of its exercise. The power of the trade enterprises in negotiations with suppliers and customers is seen as a significant source of competitive advantage and a means of increasing competitiveness.

The concepts of power and power in economic and social relations are investigated, and on this basis, the categories of market power and bargaining power are defined. A historical review of

economic practice and policy in the field of vertical agreements, price discrimination, retail chains' bargaining practices with suppliers, and the application of private labels is made.

The monograph outlines challenges to economic policy for regulating vertical relations in the context of digital transformation. The continuous complication of the supply chain of consumer products expands the opportunities for exchange between market agents and raises the problem of coordination of relationships between participants with new urgency. Producers and merchants are independent market participants, making decisions according to their own interests, but despite the existence of common goals, they differ in the ways of achieving them and the distribution of income, costs, and risks.

The author points out that in modern conditions, not only the intensity of horizontal competition is increasing, but the conflicts between the participants at different stages of the supply chain of consumer products are also deepening. Retail chains are gaining more and more control over distribution, especially in the FMCG sector. They perform functions traditionally for manufacturers and wholesalers, thus reorganizing their own operations and those of suppliers. The problems are compounded by the development of e-commerce and the digitalization of commercial processes, which lead to the creation of new business models in the field of product exchange.

These factors change the balance of power of market agents in negotiations and give rise to public and scientific discussions about the bargaining power of counterparties. The complex nature of bargaining power determines the difficulties in measuring it, as the author accepts the institutional role played by the trade enterprises as a useful approximation to the concept of dependency in the assessment of contract power and advocates the thesis that the trade enterprises will continue to develop in the conditions of digitalization through the transformation of exchange business models of consumer products.

The monograph consists of an introduction, the text structured in three chapters, and a conclusion. The *first chapter* analyzes the economic theory devoted to the relationships between market agents vertically, with a focus on the place of the transaction in the institutional theory. The essence and relationship between the concepts of market power and bargaining power is clarified. The place of exchange relationships as an object of study in marketing theory and strategic planning is examined. The methodological problems in the assessment of the bargaining power of the trade enterprises are studied, and the methodology of the study is presented and substantiated – stages, methods, and indicators for comparative structural analysis of vertically related economic sectors.

*The second chapter* is devoted to the research of the economic practice and policy in the field of bargaining power of the trade enterprises through a historical analysis of studies in the field of its evolution and the concept of abuse of a stronger bargaining position in economic policy. With the help of a comparative structural analysis through the proposed scorecard, the transformations in the contract power and market power of trade industry as an economic sector are studied. The results of the analysis prove that the institutional role of trade industry is preserved and developed. The results are in the context of the concept of the existence of a relationship between market power and bargaining power.

*In the third chapter*, the author outlines perspectives in the development of the bargaining power of the trade enterprises and highlights challenges to economic policy for protection against unfair commercial practices in the supply chain of consumer products in the context of digital transformation. Convergence and integration of functions in the supply chain of consumer products are considered sources of competitive advantages, which contribute to maintaining and increasing the bargaining power of the trade enterprises as buyers and their efficiency.

The conclusion summarizes the main inference from the study of changes in the bargaining power of wholesalers and retailers, the prospects for its future development in the context of digital transformations of business, and the challenges to the regulation of unfair practices in vertical relations.

The monograph presents the author's point of view in understanding the problems in the field of bargaining power of the trade enterprises and its evolution in the context of digitalization, which provides an opportunity to draw several important conclusions:

1. The study of the theory and practice in the field of bargaining power of undertakings for marketing in consumer products confirms the complex and debatable nature of the subject of the study.
2. The bargaining power of market participants is a multifaceted problem, the study of which requires the application of an integrated approach, and methods from different fields of scientific knowledge.
3. A comparative empirical analysis of vertically related economic sectors of production and trade industry in consumer products shows the existence of differences in the evolution of contract power in individual product markets.

4. The study of the main effects of digitalization and their impact on the bargaining power of commercial intermediaries supports the thesis of preserving the contract power of trade enterprises. New communication and digital technologies promote complementarity between exchange activities, blur the boundaries of existing industries, and lead to the emergence of new intermediary markets, including the creation of digital platforms. Convergence and integration of functions in the consumer product supply chain are sources of competitive advantages that increase the role of the trade enterprises, their bargaining power, and efficiency. The study supports the view that digitalization does not lead to the elimination of commercial intermediaries, but to the transformation of business models in the supply chain of consumer products.
5. Digital transformations, in exchange, change the balance of bargaining power and behavior of market participants, which determines the need to update the regulation of vertical relationships. The electronic environment creates prerequisites for both integration and disintegration of business processes.
6. The study of the evolution in the bargaining power of the trade enterprises provides a basis for future quantitative and qualitative studies of its role and significance in various aspects of commercial activity.

I accept not only the habilitation work but also all the submitted publications as having a direct or indirect bearing on the competition for "professor" on the following reasons: (i) they prove a very high level of knowledge of the theory, methodology, and practice in the field of competitiveness of the trade enterprises; (ii) they are based on significant research that can also be used in the applicant's teaching activities; (iii) the publications are an illustration of the evolution in the academic growth of Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD, which led to publications in renowned Bulgarian and international journals; (iv) the publications address both classic and new developments in terms of the competitiveness of the trade enterprises and their bargaining power as buyers; (v) the scientific publications contain original author's achievements, which determine a well-deserved place for assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova in academia; (vi) they are a personal product of the author, and the submitted significant works are peer-reviewed by established habilitated lecturers and researchers; (vii) they are the product of a study of the most modern and latest scientific specialized literature in the field of competitiveness, which makes it possible to draw and formulate scientific conclusions independently, which has a serious impact on



commercial and marketing thinking. From this point of view, the candidate for "professor" has a high added value for academic thought.

The above gives grounds to conclude that the scientific production presented by assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD for participation in the competition for "professor" in terms of content and quantity is sufficient and exceeds the requirements for occupying this academic position and covers the profile of the announced competition.

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

In the presented scientific publications of assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD for participation in the competition for "Professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Competitiveness of Enterprises in the Trade)", scientific contributions of theoretical, methodological, applied, and educational-methodological nature can be identified:

##### *Main theoretical contributions*

1. Based on in-depth research, theoretical generalization, critical analysis, and own opinions, the theory of economics and retail and wholesale management in the field of bargaining power of trade enterprises as a source of competitive advantage is developed and enriched by highlighting their institutional role and its evolution in the context of digitalization. The thesis that the trade enterprises will continue to grow and improve in the new omnichannel conditions through the transformation of business models is proved.

2. Extension of the existing theory in this area by examining the specificity of the relationship between market power and contractual power by clarifying the concepts of economic freedom and competition and justifying the hypothesis of not only horizontal but also vertical competition, including through vertical cooperation.

3. Complementing the theory of the evolution of trade distribution functions and activities, cross-functional consolidation and convergence between business functions, the symbiosis between offline and online retailing, and the formation of omnichannel business models, the effects of digitalization on competition and competitiveness in the trade industry.

##### *Main methodological contributions*

1. The methodological problems in the assessment of the bargaining power of the trade enterprises are studied and summarized, and on this basis, a system of indicators for comparative structural analysis of vertically related economic sectors is substantiated.

2. The problems in assessing the competitiveness of both the trade enterprises and trade as an economic sector are examined, and the models for analyzing the competitive structure of trade, the models for assessing the competitive position of the trade enterprises are summarized, and a system of indicators for assessing the competitive structure is substantiated.

3. The applicability of the managerial approach "competitive dynamics" in the conditions of omnichannel commerce, as well as of neural networks for the study of competitive positioning and the factors determining consumer behavior in e-commerce retail is justified.

#### *Leading scientific and applied contributions*

1. A system of indicators for studying the evolution of the bargaining power of trade enterprises with the help of comparative structural analysis is proposed.

2. The influence of digital technologies on the contract power of modern trade enterprises is analyzed, outlining the challenges and prospects for their development and substantiating the thesis of regulating vertical relations in the supply chain of consumer products in the context of digital transformation.

3. Through empirical analysis, the competitiveness of the trade as an economic sector has been studied, as well as the differences in labor productivity as one of the main measures of competitiveness in trade, including the impact of digitalization on it.

#### *Main educational and methodological contributions*

1. Training materials, methodological guidelines, test questions, and case studies have been developed for the purposes of the disciplines studied by students in the fields of competition and competitiveness, sales management, retail and wholesale operations management.

2. The necessity of updating commerce education in the conditions of digitalization, which reflects the interdisciplinary integration of business processes in commerce, is justified.

#### **7. Evaluation of citations**

In the reference for citations, assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD presents 46 identified citations (probably more), which are in refereed and indexed scientific journals, and 4 citations were found in Scopus. These citations are expressed in 340 points (out of the required 100 points) on the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of "Professor" according to Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova has profiles in Scopus, Web of Science,

Orcid, Google Scholar, and Research Gate, which contributes to increasing the visibility and popularization of her publications on a national and global scale.

#### **8. Participation in scientific projects and scientific forums**

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD participates in the competition for the academic position of „Professor“ with 11 scientific projects (including 5 as a project manager), 5 of these projects are for applied research, the results of which are reflected and promoted in publications (including 5 monographs); 3 scientific projects are under contracts to support the research activities of PhD students, and 3 projects are for scientific and student forums.

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD is a member (2011 – present) and was a Deputy editor-in-chief of the Yearbook of the University of Economics - Varna, member of the editorial board of the journal "Proceedings of the University of Economics - Varna" (2011-2014), member of the Scientific Council of the journal "European Journal of Service Management" – Poland (2009 - present).

She has carried out consulting activities, has been a member of expert committees at the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, and has reviewed numerous monographs, studies, articles, textbooks, and teaching aids.

#### **9. Teaching work**

In the evaluation of the teaching work of assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD the requirements of Art. 129, para. 5, item 1 of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics-Varna and Art. 29b, para. 3, item 1 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria has been taken into account.

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD has been working as a full-time lecturer at the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services at the University of Economics - Varna for more than 30 years – full-time assistant since 1988, chief assistant since 1997, and associate professor since 2004. The candidate's pedagogical experience is in accordance with the theme of the competition for "professor". The teaching activity of assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD, meets the requirements of this competition in terms of duration and quality.

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD is an established lecturer in various academic disciplines in various forms of education and qualification degrees, including full-time and distance learning for bachelor, master's, and doctoral students, which cover the subject of the announced competition for the academic position of "Professor". The academic disciplines are included in the

curricula of the courses "Economics and commerce", "Business economics", "Insurance and assurance " and "Management".

From the submitted reference, it is clear that in the academic year 2022/2023, Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD has taught lecture courses in the Bachelor's degree with a total duration of 136 hours (272 hours, equated in exercises) in the disciplines "Trade management", "Business communications", "Sales management", "Trade operations management", "Marketing" and "Business communications and negotiations". In the academic year 2023-2024, the teaching load of the candidate for "Professor" is 276 hours (552 hours, equated in exercises), the above-mentioned disciplines being supplemented by "Competition and competitiveness" and "Sales Management and advertising", and in the "Master" the teaching load is 15 hours of lectures in the disciplines "Trade management" and "Competitiveness of the trade business".

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD participates in the development of curricula for training students in the academic courses "Economics and commerce", "Business economics", "Commodity science and customs activity", "Insurance and assurance " and "Management". Independently or in co-authorship, she participated in the development of 6 textbooks and teaching aids for lecture courses developed by her. She has led teams participating in the Student scientific sessions at the University of Economics - Varna. She is the supervisor of graduates in the Bachelor's and Master's Degree programs, and only for the last five years their number is 18, and the peer-reviewed diploma theses and master's theses – 13.

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD has participated in the doctoral program "Economics and Management (commerce)" with the courses "Trade Marketing and Logistics" and "Organization and Technology of Trade", in which she developed the curricula. She is a supervisor of 4 PhD students and a shared supervision of 1 PhD student in the doctoral program, of which 1 successfully defended, 3 expelled with the right to defend, and 1 in the process of studying. He is the head of 4 scientific projects to support the development of doctoral dissertations.

#### **10. Administrative experience**

In accordance with the requirements of art. 129, para. 5, item 3 of the Regulations for the development of academic staff at the University of Economics-Varna, it should be emphasized that in his professional development assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova holds a number of administrative positions, such as: chairperson of the General assembly of University of economics - Varna (2015-2019), vice-rector of the University of economics - Varna (2001-2015), head of the Department of

Economics and management of commerce and services (2011-2023), director of the College of Tourism – Varna (2005-2011), deputy chairman of the General assembly of University of economics - Varna (2023 - present), deputy director of the Research institute of University of economics - Varna (2019-2020), deputy director of the Master's degree training center at the University of Economics – Varna (2003-2005), member of the Academic council of the University of economics - Varna (2002 – present), member of the Faculty council of the Faculty of economics at the University of economics - Varna (2004 – present), member of the Faculty council of the Faculty of informatics at the University of economics - Varna (2011-2015), member of the Attestation commission at the Faculty of economics (2005-2011), member of expert groups of the National evaluation and accreditation agency, etc. assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD is a member of the Scientific and Technical Union and the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria.

#### **11. Plagiarism**

During the acquaintance and analysis of the scientific production of assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD, I have not found plagiarism, incorrect data, or incorrect reference to other people's scientific works.

#### **12. Questions and recommendations**

In accordance with the provisions of art. 130 of the Regulations for the development of academic staff at the University of Economics-Varna, the following questions and recommendations might be addressed to the candidate for the academic position of "Professor":

1. What is the candidate's understanding of the need to regulate vertical relations in the supply chain?
2. In addition to the methodology for comparative structural analysis, what indicators for assessing bargaining power could be used at the micro level, i.e. in the relationships between the participants in the supply chain?
3. What is the candidate's opinion about the role and importance of marketplaces in online commerce in the context of digitalization?

#### **13. Conclusion**

After the studying and analyzing the scientific research and teaching activities of assoc. prof. PhD. Violeta Dimitrova, it can be concluded that the candidate for the academic position of "Professor" meets the following conditions and requirements:

1. She has obtained the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in 2000;

2. She has held the academic position of "associate professor" at the University of Economics - Varna for not less than two academic years (from 2004 to the present moment).

3. She has presented a published monographic work in a specialized scientific publishing house, which does not repeat the publications for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" and for holding the academic position "associate professor";

4. Meets and exceeds the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" under Article 2b (2) and (3) of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria;

5. Meets and exceeds the requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" at the University of Economics - Varna based on Article 2b, paragraph 5 of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria;

6. No plagiarism in scientific works has been proven following the statutory procedure.

This gives me grounds to express my full and unreserved support and categorically positive attitude to the candidature of assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD for the academic position of "Professor" in the professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (competitiveness of enterprises in the trade)". This determines my categorical final decision, which is an uncompromising "YES".

March 2025

Varna

Member of the scientific jury

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

(Prof. Dancho Danchev, PhD)

by Prof. Dr. **Septemvrina Kostova**

For Occupation of the academic position of "professor" in the professional field

**3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Competitiveness of Enterprises in Trade)**, announced in the State Gazette, issue 100/26.11.2024

### **1. General Information**

Prepared the review; Prof. Dr. Septemvrina Georgieva Kostova, Department of Trade Economics - UNWE

- Grounds for preparing a review (decision of a scientific jury appointed by order of the rector of the University of Economics-Varna No. RD 06-184/18.12.2024

### **2. Information about the competition**

3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Competitiveness of Enterprises in Trade)", Faculty of Economics, Department "Economics and Management of Trade and Services", for the needs of which the competition was announced in the State Gazette, issue 100/26.11.2024.

### **3. Candidate for the competition**

The only candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Violeta Yaneva Dimitrova. Since her habilitation in 2004, there has been a period of 20 years, during which she has developed and grown a lot in scientific and practical-applied directions. trade. . With regard to the candidate's fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for AD "professor" in the field of higher education, in which the competition is announced. under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the ZRASRB, from the presented publications it can be concluded that with a minimum number of 600 points. the candidate has 1350.67 points, which is 2 times more than necessary. With regard to the candidate's fulfillment of the additional quantitative requirements of the University of Economics - Varna under Art. 2b, para. 5 of the ZRASRB. with a minimum number of points 276, she has nearly 3 times more fulfilled, namely 878.66 points.

#### **4. Candidate data (personal characteristics): Violeta Dimitrova**

- The candidate holds the ONS "doctor". The dissertation on the topic "Marketing aspects of competitive positioning in retail trade" was defended in 2000.

- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Violeta Dimitrova fully meets the requirements in Art. 118, para. 2, items 1 and 2 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at the University of Varna (PRAS).

- Violeta Dimitrova graduated in 1980 from the Mathematical High School in Varna. The same year she took a competitive exam and was accepted to study at the University of Varna, speciality "Economics and Trade Management", which she graduated with excellent results. Since 1988 she has been a lecturer at the same department. In 2000 she defended her dissertation, and in 2004 she became a habilitator. From 2011 to 2023 (12 years), she is the head of the Department of Economics and Management of Trade and Services.

The studied 20-year period (after the associate professorship in 2004) shows broad and at the same time deep scientific interests of Violeta Dimitrova in her research work, namely:

- in the field of competitiveness of commercial enterprises, Assoc. Prof. V. Dimitrova studies competition and cooperation between participants in the supply chain, the process of increasing the contractual power of retail companies, the dynamics of competitive advantages of retail chains with fast-moving consumer goods.

- in the field of marketing - marketing aspects in the management of commercial companies with the application of neural networks for studying consumer behavior and the importance of retailers' brands.

- in the field of omnichannel commerce, she has scientific achievements in improving supply chain management and clarifying the stages of its evolution. In the field of new communication technologies, Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova has works on Block Chain and Smart Contract, explaining the influence very well.

- the digitalization of trade, the stimulation of consumer trust in e-commerce.

- Working over the years in the three main areas - retailing, logistics and marketing, Assoc. Prof. Violeta Dimitrova consistently applies the innovations of Trade 4.0 and 5.0, showing the convergence between logistics and marketing in retailing.



## 5. Description of scientific works

The monograph (2024) "Evolution of the contractual power of commercial enterprises (using the example of trade in consumer goods) is written in a volume of 200 pages. It represents the habilitation work of the candidate for AD "Professor". It was published in a specialized economic publishing house with an editorial board and editor-in-chief Prof. D.Sc. in Economics Kalyu Donev. Its reviewers are two habilitation lecturers. The monograph is structured in an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. Here we see the great potential of the candidate for professor Violeta Dimitrova in terms of in-depth research, the language and style she uses. In the era of marketing and digitalization of trade, the change in the transfer of power in negotiations into the hands of retailers due to their location close to buyers in the market has been proven. The discussion issues of income, costs, profit and risk, which are distributed between participants in the supply chain, are excellently examined. The author gives valuable suggestions on how to regulate vertical relations in the conditions of the digital transformation of trade and how to keep consumers satisfied.

The publications presented in four groups are as follows: 15 studies and articles, 3 of which are in Scopus and WEB of Sciences. They have been published in refereed journals or scientific papers, respectively in the Institute of Economics of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the journal "Dialogue" of the "D. Tsenov" Academic Society - Svishtov, the journal "Izvestiya" of the University of Varna, the Union of Scientists - Varna, the publishing house "Economy" - UNWE, as well as electronic publications. From this group of papers I can distinguish the following three:

1) Labour Productivity Gap in the Trade Industries in Bulgaria and some European countries (2023), published study (22 p.) in Scientific Research at the Institute of Economics of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, indexed by Scopus;

in Political sciences, Lawmakers, Finance, Economics & Turism, Vol.4 Economics& Turism-Sofia, indexed in WEB of Sciences;

3) Telecommunications Usage Energy Consumption in Bulgaria (2019), article (8 p.), published in Scientific Geo Conference, Vol.15 Ecology, Economics, Education and Legislation.

The scientific reports are 23, of which 14 are independent, 6 are co-authored with 1 author and 3 with more than one. Most of them were presented at scientific conferences at the University of Economics and Business of Varna (8), 2 in Albena, 3 each at the University of National and World Economy and the University of Science and Technology – Svishtov. Sofia University "Kl.Ohridski" A very good impression is left by the participation of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova at international conferences in Berlin, Paris, as well as in countries such as Norway, Slovakia, Ukraine.

According to the quantitative, structural and content characteristics of the presented works, I find that Assoc. Prof. Violeta Dimitrova fully meets the requirements of Art. 118, para. 2 items 3-6 in connection with Art. 129 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna.

**6. Identification of the contributions to the scientific research work of Assoc. Prof. Violeta Dimitrova.** The contributions can be grouped into three groups:

1) Contributions of a scientific and theoretical nature.

The candidate for professor in his publications makes a critical analysis and expresses his own opinions and theoretical generalizations. It enriches the theory of economics and trade management in the field of the bargaining power of commercial firms as a source of competitive advantage, represented by their institutional role in the supply chain for consumer products and its evolution in the conditions of digitalization. The author defends and proves the thesis that commercial firms will continue to develop in the conditions of digitalization through the transformation of business models for the exchange of consumer products. Contractual power is considered as a potential or source of a power position. The relationship between market power and contractual power, economic freedom as the right to choose, competition, which expands the freedom or opportunities for choice of market agents by providing alternative offers, is well clarified. The hypothesis of the presence of vertical competition is substantiated, including through the implementation of own brands, competitive cooperation. The essence and problems in assessing the competitiveness of commercial

companies, understood as a comparative category and the ability of the enterprise through continuous renewal and improvement to create and sustainably maintain competitive advantages, are studied. The sources of competitive advantages for commercial companies with a focus on the marketing function as a source of competitive advantage are developed through strategic marketing approaches for competitive positioning and repositioning in retail. Through theoretical and empirical descriptive analysis, the effects of digitalization on competition and competitiveness of trade have been studied - the relationship between e-commerce and economic growth; the contribution of e-commerce to the development of trade; the influence of digitalization on the competitive structure of trade, the application of blockchain technology and smart contracts as a means of increasing the competitiveness of trade business.

## 2). Contributions of a scientific and methodological nature.

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova further develops and improves the existing methodology and system of indicators, expanding the scope of application of the "neural networks" model, one of the applications of artificial intelligence. Methodological problems in assessing the contractual power of trade companies have been studied and summarized. A scientifically based selection of indicators for a comparative structural analysis of vertically interconnected economic sectors has been made. A contribution is the adaptation of the model of M. Porter to retail with a substantiated system of indicators for assessing the competitive structure, marketing variables for competitive positioning and their impact on the profitability of the enterprise, reflecting the specifics of retail trade, incl. in the conditions of omnichannel trade.; Using the statistical analysis of time series, ARDL and VAR models, the change and the relationship between the indicators of telecommunication network capacity and Internet retail sales, e-retail turnover and GDP, users of telecommunication networks and e-sales, and electricity consumption are studied. The contribution to one of the applications of artificial intelligence, to research in the field of competitive positioning of retail chains and the factors shaping consumer trust in e-retail trade, is very relevant. .

## 3) Contributions of a scientific and applied nature.

There are numerous contributions of importance for commercial practice. A system of indicators for studying the evolution of contractual power using comparative structural analysis is proposed and tested on the example of commercial enterprises in Bulgaria during the period 2000-2021. The existence of a relationship between the concentration of vertically

interconnected economic sectors and the level of gross income, measured by trade allowances/discounts, is proven. The author's view on regulating vertical relations in the consumer goods supply chain in order to protect against unfair trade practices in the context of digital transformation is rational. The empirical analysis to study the competitiveness of trade as an economic sector and its contribution to the economic development of the country in comparison with the EU countries is very well conducted. The need for an analysis of the competitiveness of the Trade sector is justified for the purposes of developing economic policies to support its development, on the one hand, and for the search for key sources of competitive advantages by trade enterprises, on the other hand. The index analysis of consumer prices and consumer inflation expectations identifies key challenges to retail management and tools for reducing consumer risk as a source of competitive advantage. The study of labor productivity as one of the main measures of the competitiveness of retail trade in Bulgaria compared to countries from Central and Eastern Europe that have made the transition to a market economy by assessing the overtaking coefficient by two main indicators: turnover and gross profit per employee in the period 2008-2021. The main reasons for the differences in labor productivity in trade are derived, a comparative characteristic of the impact of digitalization on the productivity of the retail sector in Bulgaria is made;

Assessment of the candidate's citations. Divided by groups, the citations are as follows: 4 citations in Scopus / WEB of Sciences, 26 in referenced sources and 12 in other non-referenced sources.

#### **7. Participation in scientific projects and scientific forums**

Assoc. Prof. Violeta Dimitrova has participated in 11 scientific projects, of which 6 times she is a project manager and in 5 she actively participates. The topics of the projects are always relevant in the respective years. Accordingly, some of the more important topics are also related to the competition for AD "Professor", namely Competitiveness of commercial companies, competitive dynamics, competitive positioning in trade. There are also projects with significant topics such as Product Category Management, Market Risk Research, Trade 4.0, as well as a student and doctoral project on the future of trade by 2030. Five of the presented projects are of a scientific and applied nature. The total quantitative reporting of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova's participation in scientific projects is 255 points with requirement 11, which indicates extremely active work.

## **8. Teaching work**

Since 1988, Violeta Dimitrova has been in the department and leads a wide range of disciplines, first seminar classes, and later lectures on: Organization and Technology of Trade, Trade Management, Trade Operations Management, Sales Management, Marketing, Business Communications, Trade Advertising, etc. In most of the mentioned disciplines, she is the author of curricula, textbooks and teaching aids, in most cases written with lecturers from the department staff. After 2000, when the master's degree was established, she led Trade Transactions and Negotiations, Trade Competitiveness, and so far Global Trade Business and Omnichannel Trade Business. There are also disciplines in the third doctoral degree OTT and TMM. Assoc. Prof. Violeta Dimitrova has made a great scientific contribution to the development of omnichannel trade and trade competitiveness. In her teaching activities, Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova is an experienced lecturer and uses modern teaching methods (multimedia, online learning and feedback with students). She is the scientific supervisor of 5 doctoral students, one of whom successfully defended a dissertation and three who were dismissed with the right to defend. Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova has two specializations in Logistics in the UK and France and training certificates in Strategic Marketing Management from the universities of Bradford and Economics from Delaware.

**9. Other** – The candidate's professional biography is extremely rich, as over the years she has held many administrative positions, while at the same time teaching and conducting research. Since 2002, she has been elected as a member of the Academic Council of the University of Varna, where she has remained unchanged to this day (for more than 22 years now). For the period 2003-2005, she was the Deputy Director of the Master's Program at the University. Since 2004, she has been a member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics. For the period 2005 to 2011, she was the Director of the College of Tourism at the University of Varna, and since 2015, she has been a member of the College's Attestation Committee. She is a member of the special commission at the NEAA. From 2015 to 2019 she was the Chairman of the General Assembly of the University of Economics - Varna. From 2019 to 2020 she was the Deputy Director of the Scientific Institute at the University of Economics - Varna. From 2023 to the present she is the Deputy Chairman of the General Assembly of the University of Economics. Assoc. Prof. Violeta Dimitrova has many other academic achievements. Already in the 1990s she was a member of a working group in the international academic network CCN-1 and CCN-2, a member of a TEMPUS team, Expert on ERASMUS programs. She is a member of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria and a member

of the Board, and subsequently of the Supervisory Board of the Technical University of Bulgaria - Varna. She is on the Supervisory Board of the European Journal of Service Management. She is a consultant of the Scientific Research Council - Varna. She has repeatedly been a reviewer of textbooks, monographs, studies and dissertations. My impression of Assoc. Prof. Violeta Dimetrova is that she is an extremely responsible, disciplined and effective researcher and public figure.

**10. Plagiarism** - My opinion regarding the absence of plagiarism is based on the author's declaration of originality and on meetings with her over the years at scientific conferences, doctoral defenses and other occasions. I have been following her scientific development for a long time and know her as a serious scientist with her own language and style in the development of trade science. .

**11. Critical comments on the candidate.** Regarding her participation in scientific supervision of doctoral students, where she can be extremely useful, it should be expanded. First, the defence of the three dismissed with the right to defence should be accelerated and new doctoral students should be taken on to develop new and interesting topics in commerce.

**12. Conclusion** – I can confidently state that the candidate for the academic position **Violeta Yaneva Dimitrova** fully meets the requirements and exceeds the legal and internal university minimums. I propose to the members of the Scientific Jury of the competition “3.8. Economics, scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Competitiveness of Enterprises in Commerce) to vote positively for the candidate for AD “Professor” Violeta Dimitrova.

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## REVIEW

regarding the competition for the academic position of „professor“,  
announced by the University of Economics - Varna

### 1. General information

*Reviewer:* **Prof. Mariyana Bozhinova, PhD**, "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of economics - Svishtov, professional field of study 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and management (commerce)"

*Reason for writing the review:* Order of the Rector of the University of economics - Varna, RD-06-184/18.12.2024 and the Decision of the scientific jury meeting of 04.02.2025.

### 2. Competition contest details

The competition is announced in State Gazette „Darzhaven Vestnik“ 100/26.11.2024 for the needs of the department of „Economics and Management of Commerce and Services“ at the University of Economics - Varna, field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field of study 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (competitiveness of the enterprises in trade)".

### 3. Competition candidate

The only candidate in the competition is assoc. prof. Violeta Yaneva Dimitrova, PhD, lecturer at the „Economics and management of commerce and services“ department at the University of economics - Varna.

### 4. Personal characteristics of the candidate

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD, graduated from the specialty "Economics and organization of commerce" in 1984 at the Higher institute of national economy, now University of economics - Varna, and in 2000 she acquired the PhD degree in the scientific specialty "Economics and management (commerce)".

The candidate for the competition is a long-time lecturer at the University of economics-Varna, successively occupying the academic positions of "assistant"

(1988-1996), "chief assistant" (1997-2003), and "associate professor" (from 2004 to the present). Assoc. prof. Dimitrova has worked in many administrative positions: deputy director of the Master's degree training center at its establishment (2003-2005), head of the department of „Economics and management of commerce and services“ (2011-2023), chairman of the General assembly of the University of economics - Varna (2015-2019), vice-rector of the University of economics - Varna (2011-2015), director of the College of tourism - Varna at the University of economics - Varna (2005-2011), deputy director of the Research institute of the University of economics - Varna (2019-2020), member of the Faculty council of the Faculty of economics at the University of economics - Varna (2004 - present), member of the Faculty council of the Faculty of informatics at the University of economics - Varna (2011-2015), member of the Attestation commission at the Faculty of economics (2005-2011), member of the Academic council of the University of economics - Varna (2002 - present), deputy chairman of the General assembly of the University of economics - Varna (2023 - present), which is proof of her solid managerial and organizational experience, and authority. She is a member of the Union of scientists in Bulgaria - Varna branch, a member of the Scientific and technical union (STU) - Varna, and in the period 2008-2016 has been a member of the Management board, and since 2016 she is currently a member of Control board.

Assoc. prof. Dimitrova has over **82 scientific publications**. She has participated in **11 research projects**, 5 of which are for scientific applied research, and she is the supervisor of one of them. She is the scientific supervisor of **4 PhD students**, 1 of whom has obtained the degree „doctor“, with the topic of the doctoral dissertation "Research on the competitiveness of new car trade enterprises in Bulgaria" – on the topic of the competition for "professor".

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD, has presented evidence for fulfilling all quantitative and qualitative requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor", as well as national and additional ones of the University of economics - Varna. Following the national minimum requirements, according to the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) (art. 2b) and the Regulations for its implementation (art. 1a, para 1), the candidates for the academic position "professor" in a field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences must have a minimum of 550 points, and assoc. prof. Dimitrova has a total **of 1290.67 points**. She also exceeds the quantitative requirements for



occupying the requested academic position according to art. 77, item 5 of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff (RDAS) at the University of Economics - Varna, by forming **788.66 points**, with a minimum of 275 points.

### **5. Quantitative and substantive characteristic of the submitted scientific papers since the last procedure**

In the competition for the academic position "professor", associate professor Dimitrova has presented **54 publications**, including 5 monographs, 3 scientific studies, 12 scientific articles, 25 scientific papers, 6 textbooks and teaching aids, and 3 other publications. Of these 54 papers, 28 are single-authored (2 of them are monographs), and 4 publications are in journals indexed in Scopus and/or Web of Science (3 of them are single-authored – 2 scientific studies and 1 scientific paper). The total volume of submitted publications with the personal participation of the candidate is **1512.5 pages**.

#### **SUMMARY TABLE OF THE PUBLICATIONS SUBMITTED TO THE COMPETITION of assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD**

№	Type of publications	Single-authored		Co-authored		Total	
		Number	Pages	Number	Pages	Number	Pages
1.	Monographs, incl. personal participation	2	422	3	817 74	5	1239 496
2.	Scientific studies	2	62,5	1	60	3	122,5
3.	Scientific articles	12	186	-	-	12	186
4.	Scientific papers	12	151,5	13	143	25	294,5
5.	Textbooks and teaching aids	-	-	6	1759 360	6	1759 360
6.	Other publications	-	-	3	53,5	3	53,5
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2832,5</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>3654,5</b>
	<i>incl. personal participation</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>822</i>		<i>690,5</i>		<i>1512,5</i>

The main directions in the research activity of the candidate for professor are outlined in the attached reference for scientific contributions, and I accept them. I positively appreciate that most of assoc. prof. Dimitrova's publications can gravitate in each of the following directions, which shows her ability to link scientific problems in the field of competition and competitiveness of enterprises in trade with the development of digitalization of trade processes, to look for connections and

dependencies between them. In this regard, the main areas, with the numbers of the publications adjacent to them from the List of publications, can be systematized as follows:

1. Competitive advantages of the enterprises in trade, the bargaining power as a source of competitive advantage and its evolution in the context of digitalization (№№ 1.1; 5.4.; 9.1.; 11.3.; 16.8.; 17.9.; 20.12.; 27.7.; 30.10.; 33.13.; 34.14.);

2. Competitiveness of the trade enterprise and trade as an economic sector, productivity, effects of digitalization on competition and trade competitiveness (№№ 3.2.; 4.3.; 6.5.; 12.4.; 13.5.; 14.6.; 15.7.; 31.11.; 32.12.; 36.16.; 37.17.; 39.19.; 40.20.; 41.21.; 45.25.);

3. The role of the marketing function in the trade enterprises as a source of competitive advantages, the relationship between commerce as an economic activity specialized in exchange, and marketing as a management concept and business function in enterprises (№№ 2.1.; 42.22.; 43.23.; 44.24.);

4. Application of the managerial approach "competitive dynamics" and neural networks model in the competitive analysis (№№ 7.6.; 21.1.; 25.5.; 29.9.; 35.15; 49.4.);

5. Training in economics and trade management – competition and competitiveness, sales management, trade operations management (№№ 8.7.; 10.2.; 22.2.; 23.3.; 24.4; 26.6.; 38.18; 46.1.; 47.2.; 48.3.; 50.5.; 51.6.).

In most of the publications of assoc. prof. Dimitrova, the results are not only related to scientific achievements, but are also directly aimed at the applied aspects of economics and management of trade enterprises, the competitiveness of the trade sector for the purpose of developing economic policies to support its development, on the one hand, and the search for key sources of competitive advantages of trade enterprises, on the other hand.

The main monographic (habilitation) work "*Bargaining power evolution of retail and wholesale enterprises (on the example of trade in consumer products)*" (2024, with a volume of 199 pages) aims to study the evolution of the bargaining power of trade enterprises, through a theoretical summary and empirical analysis of the relationships between the participants in the supply chain of consumer products, to bring out the prospects for its development and the challenges for economic policy in the conditions of digital transformation. The monograph consists an introduction, central text structured in three chapters and a conclusion. *The first chapter* is theoretical and foundational. It clarifies the nature and relationship

between the market and bargaining power concepts. The place of the relationship between exchange participants as an object of study in marketing theory and strategic planning is examined. The methodological problems in assessing the bargaining power of trade enterprises are studied, and the methodology of the research stages, methods, and indicators of comparative structural analysis of vertically related economic sectors are outlined and justified. *Chapter two* is devoted to a study of economic practice and policy in the area of the bargaining power of trade enterprises. With the help of a comparative structural analysis, the proposed system of indicators is used to study the transformations in the bargaining and market power of trade as an economic sector, a set of enterprises specialized in buying for resale, over the period 2008-2021. The results of the analysis are in the context of the existence of a relationship between market power and bargaining power. *In the third chapter* the author outlines perspectives on the development of the trade enterprises' bargaining power and highlights challenges for economic policy to protect against unfair commercial practices in the supply chain of consumer products in the context of digital transformation. Convergence and integration of functions in the consumer product supply chain are seen as sources of competitive advantage that enhance the role of trade enterprises' developing bargaining power, and efficiency.

The topic is undoubtedly relevant to the current conditions of development of the trade in consumer goods and the bargaining relations between the participants.

The list of publications shows that the applicant submitted a total of 5 monographs in the field of competition and competitiveness – 2 individual and 3 collective. The monographs are linked to the thematic areas, derived from the main point of the developed problems and the obtained scientific and applied results and contributions. Two of the collective monographs correspond with the topics from the list of the research projects with the participation of assoc. prof. Dimitrova, one of which she was a project manager. In this way, the contribution of her involvement in scientific research projects can be demonstrated by the publication of the results in monographs.

The candidate has submitted a declaration of authenticity of the information provided under the competition, originality of the publications and non-infringement of copyright. There is no information about the presence of plagiarism in the scientific works of assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova.

Synthesized for the performance of the qualitative indicators by the candidate in the competition can be said that the scientific publications of assoc. prof. Dimitrova are written in a clear scientific language, show professional competence and contain original authorial achievements, which determine her proper place in the scientific circles. She is an established lecturer with university and national contributions.

***In summary, the scientific production in quantitative and qualitative terms is in full compliance with the minimum national requirements in area 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", according to art. 2b, para 2 and 3 of the LDASRB and fully meets the conditions for holding the academic position "professor" according to art. 24, para 1 of the LDASRB and art. 53, para 1 of the Regulations for the implementation of the LDASRB and the requirements of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff (RDAS) at the University of Economics - Varna.***

#### **6. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of teaching and learning work**

From the reports prepared by the Department of „Academic and student affairs“ and the Master’s degree sector at UE-Varna, it is evident that for the reported period (2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic years) assoc. prof. Dimitrova has a total audience load of 276 hours of lectures in an education and qualification degree (EQD) „bachelor“ (222 hours of lectures in full-time and 54 hours of lectures in distance education) and 15 hours of lectures – in EQD „master“ in distance education. Equated in exercises, the candidate's teaching load amounts to 444 hours in full-time and 345 hours in distance learning.

She is a lecturer and has developed curricula in the following academic courses in the EQD „bachelor“: "Trade management", "Trade operations management", "Business communications", "Trade advertising", "Sales management and advertising", "Special seminar", "Sales management", "Competition and competitiveness", "Business communications and negotiation", and in the EQD "master" – "Competitiveness of the trade business", "Trade management", "Master's special seminar" and "Trade deals and negotiations". For the educational and scientific degree "doctor" assoc. prof. Dimitrova has developed curricula in "Trade marketing and logistics" and "Organization and technology of trade".

From the documents submitted, it is evident that she has been active in educational work through her participation in the development of 6 textbooks and teaching aids.

Assoc. prof. Dimitrova actively works with students as a supervisor of graduates. She has participated in organizing committees of conferences and has chaired some of them. She periodically participates in courses to increase her digital competence, work with databases, and learn the methodology of scientific work.

***In summary, the candidate's teaching activity fully complies with the RDAS requirements at the University of Economics - Varna.***

#### **7. Identification of the scientific research contributions. Evaluation of the candidate's citations**

The presented scientific production contains undeniable scientific and applied contributions, which I group into three groups: theoretical/scientific, methodological/scientific, and scientific-applied. Among the most significant ones, I can mention the following:

*First*, the existing knowledge is supplemented on: the bargaining power of the participants in commerce exchange as potential (sources of power position) and the result/effect of its exercise; the essence and relationship between the concepts of market power and bargaining power; the relationship between trade as an economic activity specialized in exchange and marketing; the sources of competitive advantages for enterprises in trade with a focus on the marketing function; the effects of digitalization on competition and trade competitiveness (*theoretical/scientific contributions*).

*Second*, a methodology for comparative structural analysis of vertically related economic sectors is proposed as the first stage of the assessment of the bargaining power of trade enterprises; based on a study of models for evaluation of the competitive structure and competitive positions, a system of indicators for competitive positioning in retail trade is substantiated; the managerial approach "competitive dynamics" is applied in the assessment of competitive behavior in trade and the neural networks model in the competitive positioning of retail chains (*methodological/scientific contributions*).

*Third*, through a comparative structural analysis of the institutional role of trade as an economic sector, its bargaining power in Bulgaria is studied, the results

of which can be used in decision-making for regulating the relations between participants in the consumer goods supply chain; the challenges of regulating vertical ties in order to protect against unfair trade practices in the conditions of digital transformation are studied; the competitiveness of trade as an economic sector, labor productivity in trade in comparison with EU countries is studied (*scientific and applied contributions*).

According to a reference presented by assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, **46 reliable citations** of her works in national and foreign scientific papers have been identified, 4 of which are in Scopus. The reference shows that assoc. prof. Dimitrova has h-index=1 in Scopus.

*The candidate's scientific contributions are mainly for the enrichment of the existing knowledge, for the improvement of the economic and managerial policy and practice in the field of trade business, its competitiveness and the sources of competitive advantages.*

#### **8. Critical remarks, questions and recommendations**

I have no significant critical remarks. My recommendation to assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova is to concentrate her efforts on publishing her scientific research in refereed scientific journals with an Impact factor and Impact rank indexed in the world scientific databases Scopus and Web of Science.

#### **9. Conclusion**

Assoc. prof. Violeta Dimitrova, PhD, participates in the competition for the academic position of "professor" with a large volume of quality scientific works and has many years of experience in scientific and teaching activities. In her scientific research, she demonstrates thoroughness, innovation, and analytical thinking, and scientific and applied contributions are present in them. The candidate fully meets the requirements for the academic position of "professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and management (competitiveness of the enterprises in trade)", specified in art. 24 of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), in art. 53 of the Regulations for the implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (RILDASRB) and in the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna.

The above gives me the reason to propose with conviction to the members of the scientific jury **assoc. prof. Violeta Yaneva Dimitrova, PhD** to be **elected** to the academic position "**PROFESSOR**" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field of study 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and management (competitiveness of the enterprises in trade)" at the department of „Economics and management of commerce and services“ at the University of economics - Varna, for which I will vote **positively**.

11.03.2025

Reviewer:

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/Prof. Mariyana Bozhinova, PhD/