



ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ВАРНА

Вх. № 20-444/21.03.2025

REVIEW

1. Prepared by the review:

Prof. Dr. Vanya Kuzdova Banabakova - professor in the field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.7. "Administration and management", scientific specialty "Organization and management outside the sphere of material production", "Vasil Levski" National Military University, Veliko Tarnovo.

The reason for writing the review is: Order of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna No. RD-06-25/28.01.2025 on the appointment of a scientific jury and Protocol No. 1 of 18.02.2025 from the first meeting of the scientific jury.

2. Information about the competition.

The competition for the academic position "Professor" is announced in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)".

The competition was announced in the State Gazette, Issue 105/13.12.2024, for the needs of the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services", at the Business Faculty, University of Economics - Varna.

3. Candidate in the competition.

In the competition for the Academic position "Professor", there is only one candidate - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova from the University of Economics - Varna.

From the submitted certificate it is evident that the candidate performs the minimum national requirements for holding the Academic position (AP) "Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences and professional direction 3.8. Economics, in which the competition is announced, in accordance with Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The submitted certificate shows that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has met the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3, respectively the requirements under Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, in accordance with the additional requirements of the University of Economics - Varna for holding academic positions.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has presented the mandatory independent monographic work on the topic "State and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria", published in 2023, in a total volume



of 152 pages, which extremely fully corresponds to the professional direction and scientific specialty of the announced competition.

The monograph on the topic "State and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria", under group of indicators V has not been declared in previous procedures for awarding scientific degrees or for occupying the academic position of Associate Professor.

Under groups G and D, she has presented the necessary publications and citations, and under group G she has formed a total number of points of 788.32, with a minimum required of 200 points. Under group D, she has formed 460 points with a minimum required of 100 points. Under group E, the candidate has formed 286.67 points with a minimum required of 100 points.

This shows that in sections G, D and E the candidate has exceeded the minimum national requirements by about 3 to over 4 times.

With regard to the additional quantitative requirements of the Economics University of Varna, pursuant to Art. 118 (2), item 6 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the Economics University of Varna, on the basis of Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the submitted report shows that the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova exceeds them, as follows:

- Scientific reports – with a minimum number of required points of 60, the candidate has 238.32 points;
- Scientific articles and studies – with a minimum number of required points of 115, the candidate has 280 points;
- Publications in Scopus and/or Web of science - with a minimum number of required points of 30, the candidate has 157.5 points;
- Citations in Scopus and/or Web of science - with a minimum number of required points of 15, the candidate has 60 points;
- Defended PhD students - with a minimum number of required points of 40, the candidate has 80 points;
- Research projects (participation and/or supervision) - with a minimum number of required points of 15, the candidate has 120 points;

On all indicators of the additional requirements of the Economics University of Varna, the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has presented a higher number of points, but her achievements on the indicators - scientific reports, publications in Scopus and/or Web of science and work on research projects (participation and/or supervision), where the overachievement is from 4 to 8 times, are particularly impressive, also the candidate has two successfully defended PhD students, with a minimum required - one, from the additional requirements of the Economics University of Varna.



4. Candidate data.

The candidate for the Academic position of Professor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova acquired the PhD Degree "Doctor" in 2003 by defending a dissertation on the topic "Integrated Management of Distribution Activities (on the example of the Soda Factory - Devnya)" in the scientific specialty 05.02.18 "Economics and Trade Management".

The candidate meets the requirements of Art. 118, para. 2, items 1 and 2 of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the Economic University of Varna.

The candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova acquired the Bachelor's degree in the specialty "Economics of Trade" at the Economic University of Varna in 1997. In 1998, she acquired the Master's degree in the same specialty, also at the Economic University of Varna.

He speaks Italian, English and Russian.

During the period 2004-2005, the candidate worked as an office assistant at the Private Professional College "Ecomintellect", Varna.

During the same period of time, he also worked as a part-time assistant at the Economic University of Varna, Department of Economics and Trade Management. From 2005 to 2011, he held the position of Chief Assistant at the Economic University of Varna in the Department of Economics and Trade Management.

In 2011, he held the academic position of Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and Trade Management, Economic University of Varna.

From 2023 to the present, she is the Vice-Head of the Department of Economics and Management of Trade and Services, Economic University of Varna.

The scientific interests of the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova are in the fields of Transport Logistics, Logistics in General, Logistics Customer Service, Trade, International Trade and International Logistics.

5. Description of scientific works.

The candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova participates in the competition for the Academic position of Professor with 70 scientific publications, systematized by categories, as follows:

- Main monographic work – 1 issue;
- Other monographs – 1 individual and 2 collective – 3 issues;
- Articles - 21 issues;
- Studies – 12 issues;
- Reports – 29 issues;
- Textbooks and teaching aids – 3 issues;
- Other publications – 1 issue.

I accept that all scientific works submitted by the candidate for participation in the competition are for review.



I am not aware of any facts that would cast doubt on the authenticity of the works and the contribution of their author. The scientific works submitted correspond to the field of higher education, the professional field and the scientific specialty of the announced competition for the Academic position of Professor.

Of the scientific publications presented, 50 are independent and 20 are co-authored. The publications are in scientific journals in Bulgaria and abroad.

Her scientific publications, which are in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in the world-renowned databases of scientific information Scopus and Web of Science, are 4 studies, of which 3 are independent and 1 is co-authored.

The candidate's scientific and applied research is mainly in the field of transport logistics, customer logistics and trade problems.

The analysis of the information provided to me shows that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova closely connects scientific research, scientific applied research, teaching and expert activities, which gives me reason to assess the candidate's scientific research, teaching and expert activities as meeting the requirements for holding the Academic position of "Professor".

In the main monographic work on the topic "State and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria" (published in 2023 in a total volume of 152 pages), the author presents the main theoretical statements related to the transport services market in order to reveal its essence, features and methodology for studying its state and development.

The monograph was developed based on the author's previously defined goal of making a theoretical overview of the essence and features of the transport services market and, based on an analysis of the state and trends of its development in Bulgaria, to localize the problems and outline guidelines for its future development.

The monograph is developed in three chapters, which are logically and consistently connected.

The first chapter defines the theoretical foundations of the transport services market based on the theoretical statements of the leading authors in the field from Bulgaria and abroad. For the purposes of the study, the author derives the concept of "transport services market" as an organizational market where the demand and supply of transport services related to the transportation of goods, provided to consumers (shippers and consignees) by transport companies, interacting with infrastructure enterprises, administrative regulatory bodies and the government, as well as with suppliers of resources for the production of transport services.

The following are also studied:

- the main features of the transport services market, as an object of market relations, which are distinguished into main, additional and accompanying;
- the main participants - users of transport services and transport operators, infrastructure managers, administrative regulatory bodies and the government;



- the self-regulation mechanism, which includes a number of elements directly related to each other and having a direct impact on the relations between market participants.

The second chapter is aimed at studying and analyzing the current state of the transport services market in Bulgaria. An in-depth study of the transport services market in Bulgaria was conducted during the period 2012 - 2021, with the analysis being in the following aspects:

- Tracking the main indicators that characterize the "Transport, warehousing and mail" sector in the country;
- The dynamics in the development of the types of transport, the services of which are in demand on the Bulgarian market for the carriage of goods, are analyzed;
- The major transport companies in Bulgaria are examined;
- The quantitative parameters of the rolling stock used by different modes of transport were tracked;
- Indicators that characterize the state of the transport infrastructure in Bulgaria during the research period and others were measured.

The third chapter is of a scientific-applied nature and it outlines the problems, opportunities and prospects for the development of the transport services market in Bulgaria, proposing both traditional approaches for development and innovative ones, mainly related to the modern digital transformation of the economy and society. The necessary investments in the transport infrastructure of Bulgaria in the context of the European transport policy are also highlighted.

For participation in the competition for the Academic position of Professor, the candidate has also indicated another independent monograph, which is not presented as a main monographic work, but also examines current and significant problems related to the development of transport in a national and international aspect.

The monograph is on the topic "Global and Regional Dimensions of Transport", in a total volume of 348 pages and was published in 2015.

The main goal of the monographic work is to systematize problems and localize development opportunities in the field of transport at the international, national and regional levels, based on research of theoretical and applied significance.

The monographic work examines the theoretical foundations of transport in the context of transport logistics and as a basic element of the logistics system. The features of modern possible optimization solutions related to the organization and management of transport are derived and the main indicators for studying the state of the transport sector are systematized.

The author proposes a mathematical model for optimization of the total amount of work performed by freight transport, which is tested on the basis of statistical data on the work performed in the transport sector of Bulgaria during the



period 2000 - 2013. Based on the testing of the model, the main guidelines for the optimal development of transporter's activity.

For the purposes of the monographic work, an empirical study of the current state of transport on an international, national and regional scale was conducted, which is based on a system of indicators, consistently and logically linked to achieve the goal set by the author.

As a result of the analyses, conclusions were formulated and the prospects for the development of individual modes of transport were outlined, related to the opportunities in various aspects in a strategic plan, which include potential directions for the organization of transport and important infrastructure solutions.

The presented independent monographic works of the candidate are developed consistently and logically. The author is fluent in the terminology of the issues under consideration. The works are of the necessary quality from a linguistic and stylistic point of view.

The scientific publications of the candidate deserve special attention, which represent four studies and are published in scientific publications, indexed and referenced in the world-famous database of scientific information Scopus.

Of these studies, 3 are independent and 1 is co-authored.

The studies examine current scientific and applied problems related to:

- Research on the specifics of the electricity market and, on this basis, a study of consumer attitudes towards satisfaction with the service and its quality, of household customers of Energo-Pro Varna in the city of Varna. The possibilities for improving the service provided by the company are outlined. The main method used in the course of the study is the questionnaire method, in order to collect primary information on the assessment of end users on the various aspects of the electricity supply process.

- Highlighting the role of transport in logistics and deriving some options for optimal solutions. Based on an analysis of the dynamics in the development of final energy consumption in the transport sector of Bulgaria, the role of technologies as a means of improving energy efficiency in the country's transport is revealed.

- Theoretical study of the essence of the circular economy and analysis of the impact of transport on the ecological situation of Bulgaria, in order to reveal opportunities for the implementation of modern solutions for environmental protection.

- Examination of the essence of courier services and the combinations of various additional components that can meet the needs and requirements of customers. Some features that apply to courier services are derived, principles that govern a modern customer service system are regulated, and indicators are systematized that can be used in the formation of a comparative characteristic of courier companies operating in a given market.



In the presented scientific publications of the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, there are no, in my opinion, texts with different titles, but with identical content (including foreign language translations of existing scientific works).

The presented scientific works of the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova are in accordance with 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 Economics University - Varna.

6. Identification of the contributions in the candidate's research work and assessment of the citations of the scientific publications.

The presented scientific works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova are distinguished by clearly expressed scientific and scientific-applied contributions, which are mainly distinguished in the following scientific areas - transport logistics, problems in trade and logistical service of customers and couriers. Most of the presented scientific publications present scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the field of transport logistics.

I accept the scientific and scientific-applied contributions presented by the candidate.

The achieved scientific and scientific-applied contributions fully correspond to the field of higher education, the professional field and the scientific specialty of the announced competition.

The main **scientific contributions** in the candidate's scientific publications are:

- The theoretical statements related to the essence and features of the transport services market have been further enriched and developed, and on this basis an adapted methodology has been proposed for a comprehensive study of the main indicators that characterize the demand and supply of transport services in the freight segment, the provision of transport infrastructure for each type of transport.
- The existing theoretical knowledge in the field of transport has been enriched, which form the content and structure of the logistics of the transport process, and theoretical statements related to making effective decisions in transport, corresponding to modern economic conditions, have been derived, summarized and argued.
- The theoretical statements about the place of transport in the circular economy have been further enriched and developed, and its role in logistics systems and supply chains has been highlighted.
- Theoretical knowledge has been further developed by proposing methodologies for: studying the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale; the influence of transport on the development of the circular economy; the development of final energy consumption in the transport sector; and the sustainable development of the transport system.



• Scientific knowledge in the field of customer service quality management at the company level has been further developed.

The indicated scientific contributions are in the following publications: 1.1.; 6.5.; 7.6.; 8.7.; 9.8.; 10.9.; 11.10.; 12.11.; 13.12.; 14.13.; 16.15.; 32.16.; 44.7.; 49.12.; 51.14.; 54.17. and 57.20.

The main **scientific and applied contributions** in the candidate's scientific publications are:

• Main problems related to the development of the transport services market in the country have been identified, which relate to both the organization of freight traffic and the state of the transport infrastructure, based on a comprehensive study of the main indicators characterizing the demand and supply of transport services in Bulgaria, as well as the national provision of transport infrastructure built for each type of transport.

• The application of the methodologies proposed by the candidate for studying the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale, the impact of transport on the development of the circular economy, the development of final energy consumption in the transport sector and the sustainable development of the transport system has been tested.

• Empirical research has been conducted and on this basis a comparative analysis of courier companies operating in Bulgaria has been made, in order to study the effects of their activities in relation to organizations that carry out retail trade outside retail outlets and the impact of digitalization in trade on their activities.

• A methodology has been developed and tested, on the basis of which comparative studies have been conducted related to the problems of concentration in the logistics sector in Bulgaria.

• Optimization models related to the organization and management of transport have been tested in the following areas: the task of maximizing the total amount of work performed in the transport sector; the transport task of minimizing transport costs; a model for optimizing the structure of passenger transport.

• The aspects of the main connections between trade and transport have been derived, as a key logistics function and the main directions in the development of modern trade.

• The state and development of passenger transport in Bulgaria by mode of transport have been studied and the specifics of this transport market have been highlighted.

• Current dimensions in the development of all transport alternatives that can be applied to freight transport: water (sea and river), rail, air, pipeline and road transport have been studied and argued.

The indicated scientific and applied contributions are in the following publications: 1.1.; 2.1.; 4.3.; 5.4.; 6.5.; 8.7.; 9.8.; 10.9.; 11.10.; 12.11.; 14.13.; 16.15.; 17.1.; 18.2.; 19.3.; 20.4.; 21.5.; 22.6.; 23.7.; 24.8.; 25.9.; 26.10.; 27.11.;



28.12.; 29.13.; 30.14.; 31.15.; 33.17.; 34.18.; 35.19.; 36.20.; 41.4.; 45.8.; 46.9.; 47.10.; 48.11.; 50.13.; 51.14.; 52.15.; 53.16.; 55.18.; 56.19.; 58.21.; 59.22.; 60.23.; 61.24.; 62.25.; 63.26.; 64.27.; 65.28. and 66.29.

The candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova shows abilities to connect scientific research with its practical applicability, very good literary awareness, mastery and successful application of appropriate methods and models for improving and optimizing logistics activities, and in particular in the field of transport and customer service. On this basis, it can be concluded that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova is a researcher, lecturer and expert with serious research and scientific-applied activity.

The main personal contribution of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, who stands out in her scientific publications and fully responds to the announced competition in terms of the field of higher education, professional field and scientific specialty, is expressed mainly in in-depth research, creative understanding and further development of the theory and methodology for improving the organization and management of transport and logistics customer service, as the candidate develops and proposes in this direction new or modified methodologies, models and possible optimization solutions.

I accept the achievements formulated in this way as significant for science and practice, including the methodologies and models offered by it. The contributions are entirely the work of the candidate and are the result of consistent and purposeful scientific research work.

The candidate's scientific publications are obviously of interest to scientific circles, which is clearly evident from the number of **citations**. It is evident that there is a large number of citations, which in total form 460 points, with a minimum required of 100 points. Of these, the candidate has 60 points (4 citations) from citations in scientific publications in Web of Science and Scopus.

7. Participation in scientific projects and scientific forums.

For the period 2014 - 2021, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has participated in 4 scientific research projects (SRP). These scientific research projects fully correspond in terms of topics and scientific research to the field of higher education, the professional field and the scientific specialty of the announced competition for the position of Academic Professor.

All projects have been successfully completed, with the set indicators being met, including developed monographic works with the participation of the candidate.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova was the manager of 2 of these projects.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova is a member of the scientific and editorial boards of a number of collections of scientific reports, as follows:



- "Trade 5.0 - digitalization and/or humanization", 2023, ISBN 978-954-21-1160-3
- "Trade 2030", 2022, ISBN 978-954-21-1129-0
- "Trade 4.0 - science, practice and education", 2018, ISBN 978-954-21-0980-8
- "Regional and global dimensions of trade", 2013, ISBN 978-954-21-0667-8

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova is also a member of the following scientific organizations: since 2017 up to the present – Union of Scientists in Bulgaria – Varna branch, section “Economic Sciences”; from 2007 to the present – Scientific and Technical Union, Varna; during the period 2017-2018 – Bulgarian Logistics Association.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has participated in a number of scientific forums in Bulgaria and abroad such as:

- Third Scientific and Business Conference on Logistics and Supply Chain Management on the topic: “Innovations and Trends in Logistics and Supply Chain Management”. UNWE, Sofia, 2023;
- International Scientific Conference on the topic: Trade 5.0: Digitalization and/or Humanization, Varna, 2023;
- Round Table “Logistics in Crisis Conditions: Challenges and Solutions”, University of Economics and Business, Varna, 2022;
- Second Scientific and Business Conference on Logistics and Supply Chain Management. UNWE, Sofia, 2021;
- Round table on the topic: "Trade - scientific knowledge and business reality". BA "D. A. Tsenov", Svishtov, 2021;
- International scientific conference on the topic "Economic science, education and real economy: development and interactions in the digital age", Varna, 2020;
- First scientific and business conference on logistics and supply chain management "Knowledge in logistics and supply chain management in Bulgaria: education, business, science", UNWE, S., 2019;
- International scientific and practical conference "Industrial business and entrepreneurship - innovations in science and practice". EU-Varna, 2018;
- Fourth and fifth international multidisciplinary scientific conferences on social sciences and arts - SGEM, Albena, 2017 and 2018;
- International scientific conference "Trade 4.0 - science, practice and education", Varna, 2018;
- International Scientific and Practical Conference on the topic "Modern Logistics - Business and Education", Varna, 2017;
- VII International Scientific Conference on the topic "Economy in a Changing World: National, Regional and Global Dimensions", Varna, 2017;



- Tenth International Conference "Logistics in a Changing World", UNWE, S. 2016;
- International Scientific and Practical Conferences "Ukraine - Bulgaria - European Union: Current State and Prospects", National Technical University, Kherson, Ukraine, 2014 and 2015;
- International Scientific Conference "Economy in a Changing World: National, Regional and Global Dimensions", EU - Varna, 2015;
- Ninth International Scientific Conference on the topic "Logistics in a Changing World", UNWE, S. 2015;
- Second Virtual Multidisciplinary Conference, University of Zilina, Slovakia, 2014;
- Scientific and practical conference on the topic: "Transport in the changing world - challenges and solutions", UNWE, S. 2014;
- Jubilee international scientific conference on the topic "Regional and global dimensions of trade", Varna, 2013;
- Jubilee international scientific conference on the topic "Trade - past, present and future", UNWE, S. 2013;
- Jubilee international scientific conference on the topic "Trends and challenges in the development of the economy", Varna, 2012;
- Jubilee international scientific conference on the topic "Logistics in the changing world" (Theory, practice, training), UNWE, S. 2011 and others.

8. Teaching work.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova is a lecturer in the Bachelor's and Master's programs at the Economic University of Varna.

In the Bachelor's degree programs, for the period from 2011 to the present, she teaches (lectures and exercises) in the following disciplines: Transport Logistics, Logistics, Customer Service Logistics, Hotel and Restaurant Management, Specialization Seminars, Trade in Industrial Products, Trade Advertising, Small Business Management, Sales Management and Organization and Technology of Trade Activities.

The candidate conducts training in full-time, part-time and distance learning.

For the same period of time, in the Master's degree programs, the candidate teaches in the following disciplines: International Trade and Logistics, International Logistics, International Trade, Distribution and Transport Logistics, Trade Logistics and Competitiveness of Trade Business.

The training that the candidate conducts in the Master's programs is also in full-time, part-time and distance learning.

For the academic years 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 at the Economic University of Varna, the total classroom workload of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova is 424 hours equivalent to lectures in the Bachelor's degree



program, and in the Master's degree program for the same period of time - 45 hours, also at the University of Varna.

For participation in the competition for the Academic position, Professor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has submitted 2 textbooks and 1 teaching aid. The textbooks are independent, and the teaching aid is co-authored.

The textbooks are as follows: Customer Logistics Service, in a total volume of 143 pages, published in 2023 and Transport Logistics, in a total volume of 258 pages, published in 2017.

The textbook is entitled Competitiveness of Commercial Business and was published in 2017.

Both textbooks and the textbook are at a high theoretical level with the necessary practical and applied focus, accurately correspond to the professional direction and scientific specialty of the announced competition and are designed to support and improve the quality of training in the relevant disciplines.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova also carries out other teaching work such as:

- Head of the specialty "Management of the Hotel and Restaurant Business" at the Center for Continuing Education of the Economic University - Varna;
- Lecturer in the disciplines "Management of the Hotel Business" and "Management of the Restaurant Business" at the Center for Continuing Education of the Economic University - Varna.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova works actively with doctoral candidates and students.

She was the scientific supervisor of two PhD students who obtained the PhD Degree "Doctor", and is currently the scientific supervisor of a PhD student who is in the process of studying for a doctoral degree.

She works with PhD students and on research projects.

She also actively supervises students from the Economic University of Varna, providing them with methodological assistance in developing scientific reports for participation in student and other scientific conferences.

For the period 2020 - 2024, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has developed the following curricula for the needs of the Economic University of Varna:

- For the Bachelor's Degree - Transport Logistics for the specialty Logistics management; Logistics for the specialty Economics and Trade management; Logistics Customer Service for the specialty Logistics management; Specialization Seminar for the Economics and Trade management; International Transport, Insurance and Customs for the specialty Economics and Trade management; Hotel and Restaurant Management for the specialty Economics and Trade management; Trade in industrial and intellectual products for the specialty Economics and Trade; Business Logistics for the specialty Accounting in English; and Planning and Analysis of Commercial Activities for the specialty Economics and Trade.



• For the Master's Degree - International Logistics for the specialty Logistics Management; International Trade and Logistics for the specialty Omnichannel Trade Business; Trade Logistics for the specialty Logistics Management; International Trade for the specialty Global Trade Business and Distribution and Transport Logistics for the specialty Logistics Management.

The curricula developed by the candidate are at a high theoretical level and reflect the fundamental theoretical statements of the leading authors in the relevant fields, as well as the candidate's views on training in the relevant discipline.

9. Others.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, in addition to teaching and research work, is also engaged in a number of other activities related to the organizational and administrative work of the Economic University of Varna as a member of:

- The General Assembly of the Economic University of Varna - from 2012 to the present;
- The General Assembly of the Business Faculty of the Economic University of Varna - from 2012 to the present;
- The Faculty Council of the Business Faculty of the Economic University of Varna - from 2012 to the present;
- The Attestation Commission at the Business Faculty of the Economic University of Varna - for the period 2023 - 2026;
- The Central Competition Commission of the Economic University of Varna - for the period 2016 - 2023;
- The Control Council of the Economic University of Varna for the period 2016 to 2019.

10. Plagiarism.

I have no doubt about plagiarism in the candidate's scientific publications, the use of incorrect data in them and incorrect references to other people's scientific works.

11. Questions to the candidate. Critical remarks to the candidate.

I have no questions or critical remarks to the candidate.

12. Conclusion.

Considering the scientific works and pedagogical qualities of the candidate, their contributions and significance for science and practice, as well as the fulfilled national minimum requirements for holding the Academic Position "Professor", the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its Implementation, as well as the additional requirements of the University of Economics - Varna, I express a positive opinion on the works



and propose that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova take the Academic Position "Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics and scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" for the needs of the Department "Economics and Management of Trade and Services", Business Faculty, University of Economics - Varna.

As a recommendation and wish for the candidate's future research work, it is to continue the development of theoretical propositions and applied research in the field of logistics.

Reviewer:

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

/Prof. D.S. Vanya Banabakova, PhD/

17.03.2025



REVIEW FOR PROMOTION TO THE RANK OF PROFESSOR

Referee: *Prof. Dr. Christina Lazarova Nikolova*
Head of Department of Transport and Energy Economics
at the University of National and World Economy
Scientific field 3.8 Economics,
Economics and Management (Economics of Transport)

About: *promotion to the rank of professor in the field of 3.8. Economics and Management*
(Transport Logistics)

1. Information about the promotion procedure

The promotion procedure has been announced with tenure in the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services, Faculty of Economics at the University of Economics - Varna, according to the Official Journal № 105/13.12.2024. I am appointed as a member of the Promotion Committee and a reviewer according to the Resolution of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna №RD-06-25/28.01.2025.

2. Information about the candidates for the promotion

Only one candidate - associate professor Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova—has submitted documents for promotion to the rank of professor. At its meeting held on February 18, 2025, the academic committee for the promotion established that Associate Professor Dr. Zhelyazkova meets the minimum national requirements for appointment to the academic position of Professor in the relevant professional field of the announced competition (pursuant to Art. 26, Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act), and also meets the quantitative criteria of the University of Economics – Varna (pursuant to Art. 26, Paragraph 5 of the same Act).

The candidate has many years of experience as a lecturer, researcher, and member of the scientific staff of the Department of Economics of Commerce at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Economics - Varna. She obtained both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Trade Economics from the University of Economics – Varna in 1997 and 1998, respectively. In 2003, she was awarded a PhD in the professional field 3.8. Economics and Management (Economics and Management of Trade) with a dissertation titled: "Integrated Management of

Distribution Activities (A Case Study of the Devnya Soda Ash Plant).”

Dr. Zhelyazkova began her professional career as an expert at the Private Vocational College “Icomintellect” Ltd. in Varna in 2004. Simultaneously, she worked as a part-time lecturer at the Department of Economics and Management of Trade at the University of Economics – Varna.

Since 2005, the candidate has been actively engaged in teaching and research activities, initially as an Assistant Professor (from 2005) and subsequently as an Associate Professor (since 2011) at the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce within the Faculty of Economics at the University of Economics – Varna. Since 2023, she has held the position of Deputy Head of the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services at the same university. In addition, she serves as the Head of the degree program Hotel and Restaurant Management at the Centre for Continuing Education of the University of Economics – Varna.

Associate Professor Zhelyazkova has been a member of the Territorial Organization of the Scientific and Technical Unions – Varna since 2007 and a member of the Union of Scientists – Varna, Section of Economic Sciences, since 2017. She was also a member of the Bulgarian Logistics Association during the period 2017–2018. The candidate is actively involved in editorial boards responsible for the publication of conference proceedings in areas aligned with her research interests.

3. Fulfillment of the requirements for promotion to associate professor

Based on the portfolio of materials submitted by the candidate, one could conclude that assoc. prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova covers all the requirements for the promotion to professor, according to the Law on the Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (article 29), as well as the additional requirements of the Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna (pursuant to Article 118, paragraph 2, items 3–6, in connection with Article 129 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria). Arguments for this are as follows:

- She defended a dissertation on the Integrated Management of Distribution Activities (A Case Study of the Devnya Soda Ash Plant) – diploma for earned PhD degree № 28784/08.01.2004 in the scientific field of Economics and Management (Economics and Management of Commerce).
- She has been appointed as an associate professor for 13 years and 6 months now in the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services, Faculty of Economics at the University of Economics - Varna (Diploma №D010/16.12.2011).
- After being appointed associate professor, she published two monographs - one habilitation monograph (title: “State and trends in the development of the market for transport services in Bulgaria”, 2023) and one not presented as a major habilitation work (title: “Global and regional dimensions of transport”, 2015).

- The candidate meets all the quantitative criteria for promotion to the rank of professor: concerning the threshold of 550 points for the appointment as a professor at the University of Economics - Varna, she has fulfilled 1684,99 points. According to the additional requirements of the University of Economics – Varna for applicants for academic positions under Article 2b, paragraph 5 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the accumulated point-based academic portfolio amounts to 935,82 points, exceeding the minimum required threshold of 275 points. A total of 70 publications have been submitted for evaluation, as follows: two single-authored monographs and two co-authored monographs with individually authored chapters; twelve studies, four of which are in English (five co-authored); twenty-one scholarly articles, including eighteen published in academic journals indexed in secondary scientific databases and three in peer-reviewed journals with editorial boards (three co-authored, ten in English, and one in Russian); twenty-nine conference papers (six in English and nine co-authored); two university textbooks (*Transport Logistics* and *Customer Service Logistics*), one co-authored teaching manual (*Competition and Competitiveness*), and one scientific review. The total volume of the research output submitted for evaluation amounts to 1 788 pages, of which 1 549 pages represent the applicant's individual scholarly contribution.
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhelyazkova has served as the principal investigator of two national, university-funded research projects, namely: NPI-116 titled "Global and Regional Dimensions of Trade and Transport" (2014–2015), and NPD-215 titled "Optimization in the Design of the Operational System of an Enterprise: A Case Study of a Nut Processing Company" (2018). In addition, she has participated as a team member in two other national, university research projects and two projects related to the organization of scientific forums.
- The applicant has successfully supervised two PhD students who have defended their dissertations with distinction: Maria Stanimirova Tokusheva, with a dissertation titled "*Opportunities for Optimization in the Design of the Operational System of a Nut Processing Enterprise*" (Diploma No. 125 / 03.05.2019); and Yanko Georgiev Georgiev, with a dissertation titled "*Integrated Management of Key Business Processes in Enterprises for the Production and Trade of Bread and Bakery Products*" (Diploma No. 160 / 29.04.2022).
- Among the publications submitted for the competition, four studies have been published in journals that are indexed and abstracted in the Scopus international scientific database.
- The citation report of the applicant's scholarly output indicates a total of 68 citations in academic publications both in Bulgaria and abroad, including: 4 citations in publications indexed in the Scopus and Web of Science databases; 16 citations in peer-reviewed monographs and edited volumes; and 48 citations in non-indexed but peer-reviewed academic journals.

4. Evaluation of Teaching Activities

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhelyazkova has delivered lecture courses and conducted seminar classes in the disciplines "Logistics," "Transport Logistics," and "Customer Service Logistics," as well as a specialized seminar for undergraduate students in the programs Economics and Trade and Logistics. She has also lectured in the courses "International Logistics," "Distribution and Transport Logistics," and "International Trade and Logistics" for students enrolled in the Commercial Business and Logistics Management Master's degree programs at the University of Economics – Varna.

She is the author of two university textbooks – Transport Logistics (2017) and Customer Service Logistics (2023) – and co-author of a teaching manual titled "Competition and Competitiveness" (2016), all of which are intended for students in the above-mentioned programs. The content of these educational materials aligns with the curricula of the courses Customer Service Logistics, Transport Logistics, and Distribution and Transport Logistics.

As a lecturer, the candidate demonstrates excellent knowledge in the field of transport logistics theory and practice, characterized by high competence, thoroughness, and creativity. This is evidenced by the highly positive feedback from academic peers and industry representatives, as well as by her extensive teaching and research experience and the national and international recognition of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhelyazkova's academic authority.

5. Characteristics and assessment of the scientific publications

Based on a thorough review of the publications submitted, we could sum up the following main fields of the candidate's research interests:

- 1) Research in the field of development, management, and competitiveness of transport and logistics. The submitted habilitation work ("State and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria," 2023) belongs to this domain. It is dedicated to analyzing and evaluating the current state and development trends of the transport services market in Bulgaria, aiming to identify key challenges and outline directions for its future development. Her previous monograph ("Global and Regional Dimensions of Transport," 2015) also addresses issues related to identifying the development prospects of different modes of transport and examining strategic-level, multi-faceted opportunities. In addition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has devoted over fifty publications to this research area, including six studies, fifteen scholarly articles in journals indexed in secondary scientific databases, seventeen peer-reviewed conference papers, and two textbooks.
- 2) Research on the impact of digitalization and transformation on the development of transport logistics and trade. In this area, the candidate has presented insightful studies, including a single-authored chapter in a collective monograph ("The Impact of Trade

Digitalization on the Economic Development of Bulgaria and Its Regions," 2021), one article published in a journal indexed in an international scientific database, and seven papers presented at national and international academic forums. The key results of this research focus on identifying challenges and proposing solutions aimed at achieving the goals of European and national policy in the fields of transport, logistics, and trade, with an emphasis on enhancing the competitiveness of these sectors through digitalization and digital transformation.

- 3) Research related to the management of commercial, courier, and postal services as elements of logistics services. The main research outcomes in this field are presented in 6 studies, four articles published in journals indexed in secondary scientific databases, seven conference proceedings, and one co-authored teaching manual. These scholarly works analyze and evaluate current trends, identify pressing challenges in the management of commercial and courier services, and systematize viable solutions.
- 4) Research in the field of human resource management in transport and logistics. In this area, the candidate has contributed with one study and one scientific paper. These publications examine the challenges and propose appropriate approaches and models for effective personnel management in the transport and logistics sectors.

The two monographs submitted for the promotion procedure are exemplary pieces of scientific research on up-to-date and original topics, boasting significant results and undeniable contributions to the field of economics and management of transport logistics. Both scientific works represent a high level of academic style and expression and demonstrate expert knowledge of methodology and practice in economics and transport management.

The monograph entitled "State and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria" (2023), submitted as the habilitation work, comprises 152 pages, structured into an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. It presents an in-depth and valuable study of one of the key sectors of the Bulgarian economy. The author skillfully combines theoretical analysis with a specific empirical investigation that spans nearly a decade and offers a detailed evaluation of the main indicators characterizing the functioning of the transport services market. Particularly impressive is the precision with which the structural characteristics of the sector are examined, including the development of individual transport modes, the condition of transport infrastructure, and the role of major market participants.

The monograph's contribution is especially significant in identifying current issues and outlining development perspectives, including the introduction of innovations and digital solutions in the transport system. The study stands out for its high level of analytical rigor, clear structure, and its contributions both from a scholarly and practical standpoint. These qualities render the work highly relevant for researchers, students, policymakers, and professionals in the transport sector.

The monograph entitled "Global and Regional Dimensions of Transport" (2015) comprises 348 pages and follows a classical academic structure, including an introduction, three

chapters, a conclusion, and appendices. It represents a substantial scientific achievement characterized by a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the transport sector. The author successfully introduces the reader to the theoretical foundations of transport within the context of the logistics system and presents modern analytical tools, including an innovative mathematical model for the optimization of transport operations.

Particularly impressive is the integration between the theoretical and empirical components of the research—based on a thorough statistical analysis of data for the period 2000–2013, the author formulates significant conclusions regarding transport development at international, national, and regional levels. The monograph is well-structured, well-argued, and offers numerous practical recommendations for improving transport policy and infrastructure. With its analytical depth, topical relevance, and original contributions, the work is valuable not only to the academic community but also to a wide range of professionals engaged in transport planning and logistics.

The candidate's portfolio contains publications in the scientific field of the promotion procedure, specifically Transport Logistics. These publications meet and even surpass the necessary quantitative and qualitative standards for appointment and promotion to the professor position at the University of Economics—Varna.

6. Assessment of the scientific and applied results and contributions

The candidate's theoretical, methodological, and applied contributions are clearly stated in the presented report and aligned with those in the submitted publications for promotion. In our opinion, these contributions could be summarized as follows:

- Scientific and theoretical results and contributions – These are related to (1) Advancing the theoretical foundation for analyzing the transport services market by introducing a structured set of indicators and approaches to link supply and demand within the transport system; (2) Proposing an interpretive framework regarding the role of transport as an element of the circular economy and sustainable development; (3) Developing a conceptual model of the role of transport within the logistics system, with an emphasis on the integration between transport and logistics functions; (4) Theoretical generalization of the characteristics of transport services as an object of logistics management, along with the formulation of definitional constructs related to “corporate transport,” “transport logistics,” and “quality of logistics service.”
- Methodological results and contributions - including (1) Development of a system of indicators for assessing the state of the transport sector at international, national, and regional levels, aligned with the goals of sustainable development; (2) Proposal of a mathematical model for optimizing the total volume of work performed by freight transport, with adaptability to various types of shipments and transport modes; (3) A methodological approach for typologizing logistics structures and analyzing the degree of concentration and competitiveness in the logistics sector.

- Applied results and contributions – including (1) Systematization of strategic development directions for individual transport modes based on empirically established trends in the Bulgarian transport sector; (2) Formulation of practically applicable guidelines for improving transport and trade services within corporate logistics; (3) Proposal of specific measures for integrating environmentally friendly and energy-efficient solutions into transport policy at both national and regional levels..

7. Critical notes and recommendations

I have no critical remarks.

With regard to her future academic development, I would recommend that Associate Professor Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova deepen her research efforts in the area of analyzing the economic effects of applying modern innovative approaches in the management of transport logistics.

I would also recommend that she continue to publish and disseminate the results of her scientific research more broadly through international academic forums and in peer-reviewed and indexed scientific journals abroad, with the aim of strengthening the visibility and recognition of the achievements of Bulgarian economic and transport science within the global research community.

8. Conclusions

I have reviewed the portfolio of materials submitted by Associate professor Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova. The portfolio includes documents representing her scientific, teaching, and social activities, which exhibit qualities that place her in competition with the foremost leaders in his field. Based on the requirements outlined in Article 29 of the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (LASDRB), as well as the regulations for its implementation and the procedures for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at the University of Economics - Varna, I believe that Assoc. prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova meets all the criteria for promotion to the professor position.

The candidate's publications undoubtedly contain the necessary theoretical, methodological, and applied contributions and present significant scientific research results. The scholarly output of Associate Professor Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova, submitted as part of the application process for the academic position of Professor, is distinguished by an impressive consistency in her research focus, encompassing key aspects of the economics and management of transport and logistics at both national and international levels. Her work demonstrates a high degree of systematization in constructing the theoretical framework, as well as in the selection and analysis of empirical data, with each step of the research process clearly justified and methodologically sound. Noteworthy is the precision with which she formulates definitions, delineates research indicators, and interprets results, all of which contribute to the high quality of

the scientific conclusions. Her overall approach is marked by academic rigor, reflected in the consistent referencing of established scientific schools of thought and adherence to academic ethics. At the same time, her research reveals remarkable depth, analyzing the transport sector not only through economic and logistical indicators but also from strategic and infrastructural perspectives. All of this attests to a well-established scientific profile and a high degree of professional and academic maturity, fully in line with the requirements for holding the academic position of "Professor."

At the time of review preparation, there have been no reports of copyright infringement, and there is no overlap with scientific works authored by others.

Based on all of the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the submitted application and recommend that the esteemed members of the Academic Committee support the promotion of Associate Professor Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova to the academic position of Professor in Area of Higher Education 3. Social Sciences, Economics and Law, Professional Field 3.8. Economics, in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" at the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services, Faculty of Economics, University of Economics – Varna.

07.04.2025
Sofia

Signature:

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

REVIEW

By: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Silviya Georgieva Blagoeva - Karamfilova, habilitated in professional field 3.8 "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Logistics and Operations Management)", University of Economics - Varna

Subject: competition for occupying the academic position "professor" in professional field 3.8 "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" at University of Economics - Varna

1. Information about the competition

The competition was announced in the State Gazette No. 105/13.12.2024 for occupying the academic position "professor" in professional field 3.8 "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" for the needs of the Department "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the University of Economics - Varna. I participate in the scientific jury of the competition according to order No. RD 06-25/28.01.2025 of the rector of the University of Economics - Varna. The review was prepared according to the decision of the scientific jury at a meeting held on 18.02.2025.

2. Candidate for the competition

Only one candidate participated in the competition for the academic position of "professor": Associate Professor Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, a full-time lecturer at the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna.

The required number of points to fulfill the minimum national requirements according to Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Academic Staff Development Act is 550, and the actual fulfillment by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova is 1684.99 points, as follows:

- defended dissertation work for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" on the topic "Integrated management of distribution activities (on the example of the Soda Ash Plant - Devnya)" (50 points);
- habilitation work (monograph) on the topic "State and trends in the development of the transport services market in Bulgaria" (100 points);
- published independent monograph on the topic "Global and regional dimensions of transport", which has not been presented as the main habilitation work in a previous or current procedure - 100 points; 48 articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes for 413.32 points;
- 4 studies published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Scopus and/or Web of Science) for 157.5 points;
- 7 studies published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes (77.5 points);
- published independent chapter in 2 collective monographs for 40 points;
- 4 citations in scientific publications, monographs, collective volumes, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Scopus and/or Web of Science) for 60 points; the attached reference describes 64 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review, as well as in non-refereed journals with scientific review for a total of 400 points;
- supervision of two successfully defended doctoral students (80 points);
- supervision/participation in 6 national scientific or educational projects (120 points);
- 2 published university textbooks (80 points);
- 1 published university teaching aid (6.67 points).

The fulfillment of the quantitative requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor" at the University of Economics - Varna, specified in the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna on the basis of Art.

2b, para. 5 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, is as follows: with 60 points required for scientific reports, the candidate has 238.32; with 115 points required for scientific articles and studies, the candidate has 280 points; with 30 points required for publications in Scopus and/or Web of Science, the candidate has 157.5; with 15 points required for citations in Scopus and/or Web of Science, the candidate has 60; with 40 points required for doctoral students who have defended their doctoral dissertations, the candidate has 80; with 15 points required for participation and/or leadership of research projects, the candidate has 120.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova exceeds by more than three times the minimum national requirements for the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, in which the competition is announced. She also categorically exceeds the additional quantitative requirements of the University of Economics - Varna under Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

3. Information about the candidate in the competition

In 1997, Donka Zhelyazkova acquired the educational and qualification degree "bachelor" (specialty "Economics of Trade") at the University of Economics - Varna, and in 1998 she also acquired the educational and qualification degree "master" - specialty "Economics of Trade", University of Economics - Varna. She successfully defended her doctoral dissertation in 2003. She was awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty 05.02.18 "Economics and Trade Management".

In the period October 2004-2005 she was a part-time assistant at the Department of Economics and Trade Management at the University of Economics - Varna and an office assistant at the Private Professional College "Ecomintellect" EOOD, Varna. From 2005 to 2011 she held the academic position of "chief assistant" at the Department of Economics and Trade Management at the University of Economics - Varna. In October 2011 she won a competition and was elected to the academic position of "associate professor" in Professional Direction 3.8. "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Logistics)" in the same department. Since June 2023 she has also held an administrative position as deputy head of the Department of Economics and Management of Trade and Services.

The candidate's areas of scientific interest are in the field of the announced competition - transport logistics, logistics, customer logistics, international trade, international logistics. She is fluent in English, Russian and Italian.

I personally know Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova from the period of study at the educational and scientific degree "doctor". We worked together on the preparation of the educational documentation and the implementation of the idea of opening a bachelor's program in logistics at the University of Economics - Varna in 2007, and in 2012 also the master's specialty "Logistics Management". Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova also supported the idea of offering a distance learning form in the specialty at the educational and qualification degree "master" in the academic year 2017/2018 with the development of a package of electronic educational materials in the disciplines she teaches. I can say that in close cooperation and at the moment we carry out all activities related to the training of students in logistics in both educational and qualification levels.

4. Quantitative, structural and content characteristics of the submitted scientific papers

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has provided the necessary evidence for the fulfillment of the conditions specified in Art. 118, para. 2, items 1-7 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna for occupying the academic position of "professor":

1. She has acquired the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty 05.02.18 "Economics and Trade Management" since 2003.

2. She holds the academic position of "Associate Professor" in Economics and Management (Logistics) at the University of Economics - Varna since 2011, Department of "Economics and Trade Management" (for 14 years now).

3. She submits for participation in the competition published in the ed. "Science and Economics", bibliography "Prof. Tsani Kalyandzhiev" in 2023 a monographic work on the topic: "State and trends in the development of the transport services market in Bulgaria", which does not repeat those submitted for the acquisition of the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" and for occupying the academic position "Associate Professor".

4. References are submitted for fulfilling the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences" according to Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" at the University of Economics - Varna on the basis of Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

5. The candidate submits a declaration of originality of scientific works.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova participates in the competition for the academic position of "professor" with 70 publications (independent - 71.4% and in co-authorship), a total of 1788 pages of personal participation, including:

1. Monographs - 4 issues, 572 pages (of which 2 independent, 500 pages).
2. Studies – 12 issues, 387 pages (of which 7 are independent, 299 pages).
3. Scientific articles – 21 issues, 185 pages (of which 18 are independent, 164 pages).
4. Scientific reports – 29 issues, 208 pages (of which 20 are independent, 178 pages).
5. Textbooks and teaching aids – 3 issues (of which 2 are independent textbooks – 403 pages and one aid in co-authorship with personal participation of the candidate 28 pages).
6. Other publications – 1 issue, 5 pages.

In terms of content, the main part of the publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova (49 issues) are dedicated to problems related to the theory and practice of transport logistics, and they are supplemented and further developed in studies examining the problems of trade (8 issues), customer service and couriers (12 issues). In terms of quality, the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova is characterized by purposefulness, analyticality and thoroughness. Basic theoretical statements related to transport logistics (the market of transport services, logistics of the transport process, modern solutions in transport, features of the transport sector, place and role of transport in the circular economy), customer service and courier services are systematized, enriched and further developed. Convincing evidence of the high quality and scientific value of the candidate's production is the fact that 4 studies (3 independent and one co-authored) have been published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Scopus). 61 of the remaining publications for participation in the competition (studies, articles, reports) have been published in the National Reference List of Contemporary Bulgarian Scientific Publications with Scientific Review.

In structural terms, independent publications predominate (71.4% of the total number), and this covers all types of publications (monographs, studies, articles, reports, textbooks). Such a ratio is a sufficiently strong argument in support of the independence of the candidate's scientific achievements and contributions. The chosen scientific direction allows the author to work actively, proving herself as a competent researcher who justifies her ideas and convincingly achieves the goal of her studies. At the moment, there are no other researchers within the university who have studied the theory and practice of transport logistics so consistently, multi-facetedly and in depth. The joint publications emphasize the skills of Assoc. Prof. Zhelyazkova to work successfully and in a team.

A central place in the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova is occupied by the habilitation work on the topic "State and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria", published in 2023 by the "Science and Economics"

publishing house, bibliography "Prof. Tsani Kalyandzhiev", University of Economics - Varna. The monograph is an in-depth theoretical study of problems significant for practice, related to the development of the transport services market in Bulgaria, but also contains proposals of a practical and applied nature. Achieving the set goal of the monographic study, Assoc. Prof. Zhelyazkova convincingly complements the theoretical statements related to the essence and features of the transport services market. In the first chapter of the work, the essence of the concept of "transport services market" is revealed on the basis of an in-depth literature review, summaries made and a clearly outlined author's position. The main features of this market, related to transport services as an object of market relations, are also examined; main participants - users of transport services and transport operators, infrastructure managers, administrative regulatory bodies and the government; the operation of a self-regulation mechanism, which includes many elements, interconnected and directly influencing the relations between market participants. The second chapter is devoted to the current state of the transport services market in Bulgaria, with the author tracking its dynamic development based on basic economic indicators at comparable prices for the "Transport, warehousing and mail" sector in the country for the period 2012 - 2020. The potential of the Bulgarian transport services market is analyzed through the prism of the dynamics in the development of the sought-after types of transport on the Bulgarian freight market; the state of large companies offering transport services; the quantitative characteristics of the rolling stock operated by each type of transport. The study is deepened by including indicators for assessing the transport infrastructure in Bulgaria for the period 2012 - 2021. The third chapter is of a practical nature and outlines problems, opportunities and prospects for the development of the transport services market in Bulgaria, related not only to conventional development approaches, but also to innovative practices. Investments in transport infrastructure in Bulgaria are also examined through the prism of European transport policy.

The list of publications includes another independent monographic work on the topic "Global and Regional Dimensions of Transport", published in 2015 by the "Science and Economics" Publishing House, University of Economics - Varna. The monograph is a complex and in-depth scientific study, the result of a scientific project led by the candidate, the main goal of which is, based on research of theoretical and applied significance, to systematize problems and localize development opportunities in the field of transport at the international, national and regional levels. The work contains a number of theoretical contributions related to revealing the theoretical foundations of transport in the context of transport logistics and within the boundaries of the logistics system. In parallel, some features of modern solutions have been specified and indicators for studying the state of the transport sector have been systematized. A mathematical model for optimizing the total amount of work performed by freight transport has also been constructed. The model has been tested using statistical data on the work carried out in the transport sector of Bulgaria for the period 2000 - 2013 and on this basis, basic guidelines for optimal development of transport activity have been formulated. The empirical study conducted by the author reveals the current state of transport on an international, national and regional scale, based on a system of indicators. As a result of the analyses, prospects for the development of individual modes of transport have been derived, related to multi-faceted opportunities in a strategic plan, aimed at both the organization of transport and the transport infrastructure.

The 4 studies published in the journal "Economic Research", Sofia: Institute for Economic Research of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (indexed in Scopus) are also distinguished by a number of contributing moments. They cover a wide range of problems related to:

- first, transport logistics – 1) highlighting the place of transport in logistics (in theoretical terms), comparing the individual modes of transport and offering technology-based options for optimal solutions for final energy consumption in the transport sector of Bulgaria; 2) theoretical review of the essence of the circular economy and assessment of the impact of

transport on the environmental situation of Bulgaria, in order to reveal opportunities for implementing modern solutions for environmental protection;

- second, trade and customer service – research into the specifics of the electricity market, research into consumer attitudes towards service satisfaction and the quality of the service provided to household customers, revealing opportunities for improving the service provided;

third, courier companies – a methodology has been developed that allows for a comparative characterization of courier companies operating in a given market; a comparative characterization of courier companies operating in Bulgaria has been made; the state of non-universal postal services in Bulgaria has been analyzed and the conditions offered for international and domestic deliveries have been characterized in a comparative manner; problems that accompany the provision of courier services in Bulgaria have been identified and recommendations have been formulated for improving the quality of service to both private and business customers.

I will evaluate the remaining publications collectively. They treat various aspects of current problems related to transport, transport logistics, international logistics, international trade, as well as the logistics service of customers and the activities of courier companies. The indicated areas have been in the field of scientific interests of the candidate for a long time and the in-depth studies carried out contain methodologies, summaries and proposals that can be used to improve logistics practice both at the company and national levels. In my opinion, the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova corresponds in terms of subject matter and content to the announced competition for the academic position of "professor" in Professional field 3.8 "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" and is appropriately linked to the academic disciplines in which she carries out her teaching activities.

The scientific publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova do not repeat those for acquiring the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor" and the academic position of "Associate Professor", they are dedicated to serious problems related to logistics theory and practice, and they highlight significant assessments, conclusions and recommendations. Some of them have been published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Scopus), as well as in non-indexed scientific journals or in edited collective volumes, included in the National Reference List of Bulgarian Scientific Publications with Scientific Review of the National Center for Information and Documentation. The published textbooks, incl. teaching aids are of a high academic level, well-established in methodological and content terms, which is one of the most important conditions for the effective training of students.

5. Identification of scientific and scientific-applied contributions

The long-term scientific research of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova in the field of transport logistics, customer service, courier services and trade has provided the opportunity to create production with a number of contributions in the following areas:

1. Scientific contributions

1.1. The theory regarding the essence and features of the transport services market has been summarized and further developed, and an adapted methodology has been proposed for a comprehensive study of key indicators characterizing the demand and supply of transport services in the freight transport segment, as well as the provision of transport infrastructure for each mode of transport.

1.2. The existing knowledge regarding the place of transport in the circular economy has been enriched and its role within the scope of transport and logistics systems and supply chains has been highlighted. The theoretical framework in the field of transport has also been supplemented with a clarification of the essence and structure of the logistics of the transport process.

1.3. The theoretical knowledge has been supplemented with methodologies for studying the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale, the influence of transport on the development of the circular economy, the development of final energy consumption in the transport sector, and the sustainable development of the transport system.

1.4. Scientific knowledge in the field of service quality management at the company level has been further developed.

2. Practical and applied contributions

2.1. The main indicators characterizing the demand and supply of transport services in Bulgaria, as well as the national provision with transport infrastructure built for each type of transport, have been comprehensively studied. On this basis, serious problems have been identified that accompany the development of the transport services market in the country, related to the organization of the movement of cargo flows and the objective state of the transport infrastructure.

2.2. Methods have been applied to study the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale, the influence of transport on the development of the circular economy, the development of final energy consumption in the transport sector, and the sustainable development of the transport system. Modern solutions in transport under modern economic conditions have been presented. Relationships between trade and transport as a key logistics function have been studied, including main directions in the development of modern trade.

2.3. Comparative studies have been conducted on courier companies operating in Bulgaria, on the effects of their activities in relation to organizations carrying out retail trade outside retail outlets and on the impact of digitalization in trade on their activities.

2.4. A methodology has been developed and comparative studies have been carried out on the problems of concentration in the logistics sector of Bulgaria.

2.5. Models of the task of maximizing the total amount of work performed in the transport sector, of the transport task of minimizing transport costs, of a model for optimizing the structure of passenger transport have been tested.

2.6. The state and development of passenger transport in Bulgaria by mode of transport has been studied, taking into account the specifics of this transport market. Current dimensions in the development of all transport alternatives used in the transport of goods: water (sea and river), rail, air, pipeline and road transport have been studied and argued.

6. Evaluation of citations

The report on the fulfillment of the minimum national requirements shows that a significant part of the scientific publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova have been cited by Bulgarian and foreign authors - evidence of 460 citation points has been presented, significantly exceeding the required ones. This is convincing evidence that the candidate's scientific achievements in the field of logistics are well known to the scientific community in our country and abroad.

7. Participation in scientific projects and scientific forums

In the period after the first habilitation, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova is the leader of 2 and a participant in 2 research projects related to the topic of the competition: 1. leader of the Scientific Professional Exhibition -116 project on the topic "Global and Regional Dimensions of Trade and Transport" (2014 - 2015), successfully completed with the publication of two independent monographic works (Assoc. Prof. Zhelyazkova is the author of one of them); 2. member of the team of the Scientific Professional Exhibition project. -12 on the topic "Optimal Management of Economic Systems" (2017 - 2019), with the head of Prof. Dr. R. Nikolaev, successfully completed with the publication of a monographic work; 3. head of the Scientific Professional Activity project-215 on the topic "Optimization of the design of the operating system of an enterprise (on the example of a nut processing enterprise)" (2018), successfully completed with the development of a research part of a dissertation on the topic: "Optimization opportunities in the design of the operating system of a nut processing

enterprise"; 4. member of the team of the Scientific and Applied Institute project. -22 on the topic "Impact of the digitalization of trade on the economic development of Bulgaria and the regions" (2018 - 2020), with the head of Assoc. Prof. Dr. V. Dimitrova, successfully completed with the publication of a monographic work. The achieved high scientific results are categorical evidence of the candidate's research skills and the ability to lead and work in a team.

Assoc. Prof. Zhelyazkova participates in the teams and in two more projects, which end with the organization and holding of a scientific forum: 1. Scientific Professional Conference-231 Jubilee International Scientific Conference on the topic "Trade 4.0 - theory, practice and education", 18.04.2018 - 31.12.2018; 2. Scientific Professional Conference -329 Trade 5.0 digitalization and/or humanization, 04.08.2023 - 31.12.2023. In addition, she is an active participant in national and international scientific forums, which is evident from the attached documents for the competition.

Assoc. Prof. Zhelyazkova is a member of the scientific and editorial boards of four collections of reports, the result of scientific conferences organized by the Department of Economics and Management of Trade and Services in recent years. She is a member of the following organizations: Territorial Organization of Scientific and Technical Unions - Varna since 2007; Union of Scientists - Varna, Section "Economic Sciences" since 2017; Bulgarian Logistics Association (2017-2018).

8. Quantitative and qualitative assessment of teaching and learning

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova is a respected university lecturer and participates in the training of students of the educational and qualification degree "bachelor" and educational and qualification degree "master" at the University of Economics - Varna. She teaches the following disciplines (lectures and exercises) at the University of Economics - Varna:

1. In the educational and qualification degree "bachelor" - specialty "Logistics", full-time form of study: Transport Logistics (lectures and exercises), Logistics Customer Service (lectures and exercises); specialty "Economics and Trade", full-time, part-time and distance learning form: Logistics (lectures and exercises), Special seminar (lectures), Hotel and restaurant management (lectures and exercises), Trade with industrial products (lectures and exercises), Commercial advertising (exercises), Small business management (exercises), Sales management (exercises), Organization and technology of commercial activity (exercises).

2. In the educational and qualification degree "Master" - specialty "Logistics Management", full-time, part-time and distance learning form: International logistics (lectures and exercises), Commercial logistics (lectures and exercises), Distribution and transport logistics (lectures and exercises); specialty "Omnichannel commercial business", distance learning form: International trade and logistics (lectures); specialty "Global commercial business", full-time and part-time learning form: International trade (lectures), Competitiveness of commercial business (exercises).

When updating the educational documentation in 2024, he participates in the teams for developing the curricula of the indicated and other disciplines (a total of 9 programs in the educational and qualification degree "bachelor" and 5 programs in the educational and qualification degree "master"). For each of the last two completed academic years (2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic years) the candidate in the competition has a full annual study load in the educational and qualification degree "bachelor" (the reference indicates a total of 424 unreduced study hours in the educational and qualification degree "bachelor" and a total of 45 unreduced study hours in the educational and qualification degree "master"). The disciplines taught are in the field of the announced competition and permanently ensure a full annual study audience load for the candidate in accordance with the standards approved by the university.

In my opinion, a positive assessment should also be given to the active extracurricular work with students: 1) scientific supervision of dozens of graduates in the specialty "Logistics", educational and qualification degree "Bachelor" and specialty "Logistics Management" in the educational and qualification degree "Master"; 2) reviewing dozens of diploma theses of

students in the indicated specialties; 3) carrying out joint publications with students (3 published) and doctoral students (1) from the University of Economics-Varna.

Assoc. Prof. Zhelyazkova's efforts to provide students with textbooks and teaching aids, including electronic teaching materials for students in a distance learning format, deserve high praise. Assoc. Prof. Zhelyazkova has independently published 2 textbooks for students in the specialty "Logistics" and one teaching aid in co-authorship for students in the specialty "Economics and Trade".

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has provided scientific supervision to two doctoral students who have acquired the Educational Scientific Degree "Doctor". She is currently supervising one full-time doctoral student.

The candidate in the competition presents data on teaching activities at the Center for Continuing Education of the University of Economics - Varna: she is the head of the specialty "Hotel and Restaurant Business Management" and a lecturer in the disciplines "Hotel Business Management" and "Restaurant Business Management".

What has been reflected so far gives reason to claim that in nature and content, the teaching activities of Assoc. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova fully corresponds to the topic and scientific field of the announced competition. At the same time, it characterizes her as an experienced and established university lecturer with an established teaching authority. The developed lecture courses, the conducted seminars, the scientific supervision of doctoral students and the active methodological work with students are categorical proof that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova successfully participates in the preparation of logistics specialists for practice.

9. Administrative experience and achievements

Assoc. Prof. Zhelyazkova also has administrative experience. In June 2023, she was elected Deputy Head of the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" - a position she currently holds. She has been a member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration since 2012; since 2023, she has been elected a member of the Faculty's Attestation Commission. She was a member of the Central Competition Commission of the University of Economics – Varna for 7 years (2016 – 2023) and for one term she was a member of the Control Council of the University of Economics – Varna.

10. Plagiarism – in the candidate's scientific production I have not found plagiarism, incorrect data or incorrect references to other scientific works.

11. Critical notes and recommendations

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has the necessary research potential and can carry out independent and team scientific research. I would kindly recommend to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhelyazkova:

- to continue to work actively as a leader of research teams for the implementation of scientific projects in the field of logistics;
- to work actively for publication in scientific publications, refereed and indexed in world-renowned databases;
- to continue to work with young people and motivate them to achieve success in the field of logistics.

12. Conclusion

The in-depth analysis of the documents and works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova gives reason to claim that:

1. All conditions and requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for holding the academic position of "professor" have been met.

2. With the position held and the publications realized in quantity, type, content and quality, she fulfills the requirements of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic

Staff at the University of Economics - Varna (in their part for holding the academic position of "professor").

All this gives me reason to confidently express a categorically positive attitude towards the competition and to support the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova to occupy the academic position of "professor" in professional field 3.8 "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" at the University of Economics - Varna, as well as to recommend to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to support this decision.

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

08.04.2025
Varna

Reviewer: (Assoc. Prof. Dr. Silviya G. Blagoeva)