



## STATEMENT

By: *Prof. Dr. Miroslava Atanasova Rakovska*  
*Scientific specialty: Economics and Management (Business Logistics)*  
*University of National and World Economy*

### 1. General information about the competition

I am part of the scientific jury for the competition according to Order No. 06-25/28.01.2025 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna.

### 2. Data about the competition

The competition for a professor, announced in the State Newspaper № 105 / 13.12.2024, is in professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" for the needs of the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services, Faculty of Economics at the University of Economics – Varna.

### 3. Candidate in the competition

One candidate participates in the announced competition for a professor – assoc. prof. dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova from the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services, Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna.

The candidate in the competition has acquired the doctoral degree, has held the academic position of associate professor for more than two academic years (14 years) and has a published monographic work that does not repeat the one submitted for acquiring the doctoral degree and for holding the academic position of associate professor.

For the period from the academic year 2022/2023 to the academic year 2023/2024, assoc. prof. dr. Zhelyazkova has a total of 424 hours of teaching work in the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in 17 lecture courses and participates in preparing curricula. She has published 2 self-developed textbooks and 1 in co-authorship. She has supervised two doctoral students who have acquired the Doctor's degree, 2 research projects and has participated in 2 projects, as well as in 29 conferences in the country and abroad. In addition to the self-developed monograph presented as the main habilitation work, assoc. prof. dr. Zhelyazkova is the author and co-author of a total of 15 monographs and studies, 21 scientific articles and 29 scientific papers. 67 citations in scientific publications have been established.

The above confirms that the candidate in the competition meets all mandatory requirements for holding the academic position of professor according to Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3



of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in Bulgaria. Assoc. prof. dr. Donka Zhelyazkova also meets all additional quantitative requirements of UE-Varna.

#### **4. Personal characteristics of the candidate**

Assoc. prof. dr. Donka Zhelyazkova graduated Bachelor's and Master's degree in Economics of Commerce at UE-Varna, and in 2003 she obtained the Doctor's degree in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management of Commerce". Since 2004 she has been successively a part-time assistant, chief assistant and associate professor at the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce at UE-Varna. She speaks English, Russian and Italian.

#### **5. Quantitative, structural and content characteristics of the presented scientific works**

In terms of content, the works submitted for review mainly concern the field of transport logistics, as well as the problems of commerce, customer service and courier services. The publications are distinguished by the use of representative literature sources.

*The self-developed monographic work* on the topic "State and trends in the development of the market for transport services in Bulgaria" is 152 pages long. The monograph offers an in-depth study of the transport services market in Bulgaria for the period from 2012 to 2021. The first part defines the theoretical foundations of the market, emphasizing its essence and specifics, including the interaction between transport companies, infrastructure organizations and state institutions. The second part analyses the economic indicators and the dynamics of demand for various transportation modes, focusing on the development of large transport companies and the state of the transport infrastructure in the country. The third part examines current problems, opportunities and future prospects for the transport services market, including the innovations and opportunities offered by modern technologies and digitalization. The monograph has a useful theoretical and practical contribution to understanding the state of the Bulgarian transport market and offers a basis for strategic development in the future. It is a valuable resource for academic research and practical application in the transport sector, offering clear guidelines for its modernization and adaptation to the modern requirements and European policies.

*The monographs and studies* provide an in-depth and substantiated analysis of the development of passenger transport in Bulgaria during the period 2012-2022, examining in detail the preferences of Bulgarian consumers towards different transport alternatives and the impact of digitalization on trade and the economy. The studies in the field of courier services and competition in the sector "Transport, Warehousing and Postal Services" cover a variety of important topics, including scenarios for trade relations between the EU and Russia, transport and logistics systems, as well as sustainable development. The studies combine theoretical statements and empirical data, with particularly valuable proposals for improving energy



efficiency, the circular economy and the quality of courier and postal services, as well as specific solutions for the modernization of the infrastructure and the sustainable development of transport services in Bulgaria.

*The scientific articles* examine current challenges and opportunities in various transport sectors in Bulgaria, including maritime, air and passenger transport, with an emphasis on the impact of global and geopolitical changes. The research focuses on the possibility of restoring the Bulgarian fleet and modernizing the port infrastructure, emphasizing the importance of stabilizing the Black Sea region. Air transport is another focus in the articles, with the author analyzing low-cost airlines and their contribution to the development of aviation and making moderately optimistic forecasts for stabilizing demand in the sector. The articles also present the importance of digitalization, innovative solutions and investments in new technologies for logistics services in Bulgaria, emphasizing their key role in global trade and economic development. They offer prospects for sustainable development of the transport sector in Bulgaria, emphasizing the importance of integrating transport solutions and environmental standards into the processes of transport logistics and trade.

*The reports* successfully address the key challenges facing human resources in the logistics sector, emphasizing the importance of digital tools and technologies for optimizing logistics processes. Digitalization not only leads to significant changes in supply chains, but also accelerates transport processes, while facilitating the transition to more sustainable solutions. The growing importance of sustainable development is emphasized, which places new demands on the logistics sector, as every logistics activity must be reviewed and adapted to global trends. The reports discuss how innovations in the energy sector can support sustainable development, while emphasizing the need to expand the scope of postal services and their transformation to modern and technological solutions. The optimization of logistics processes in courier service companies through digitalization is also an important topic, and current issues related to shared mobility and the possibilities for using electric vehicles in urban environments are also discussed. The systematization of the challenges facing human resources in the logistics and transport sectors, as well as the consideration of digital transformation and sustainable development, emphasize that innovations and technologies will continue to play a key role.

The scientific works of assoc. prof. dr. Donka Zhelyazkova are distinguished by a logical structure, clear and understandable language and style. The analysis and evaluation of her publication activity show high scientific achievements, significance for practice and full compliance with the requirements for acquiring the academic title of "professor".

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

The candidate's scientific and applied scientific contributions can be summarized as follows:

1. The theory of the essence and features of the transport services market, the content and structure of logistics in the transport process, the place of transport in the circular economy and



its role in supply chains has been enriched and expanded. Modern theoretical solutions for transport in the context of current economic conditions have been summarized and argued.

2. Scientific knowledge in the field of service quality management at the company level has been further developed, providing new perspectives for improving processes in transport.

3. Adapted methodologies have been developed for studying the demand and supply of transport services for freight transport, as well as the provision of transport infrastructure for each mode of transport. Methods have been further developed 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, energy consumption in the transport sector, as well as the sustainable development of the transport system.

4. The developed methodologies have been tested, whereby the demand and supply of transport services for freight transport, the provision of transport infrastructure for each type of transport, the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale, the impact of transport on the development of the circular economy, energy consumption in the transport sector, as well as the sustainable development of the transport system have been analysed and assessed. Problems of the development of the transport services market and those related to the state of the transport infrastructure in the country have been identified.

5. Based on the research conducted, the effects of the activities of courier companies operating in Bulgaria on organizations carrying out retail trade outside commercial premises, as well as the impact of digitalization in trade on their activities, have been assessed.

6. The problems of concentration in the logistics sector of Bulgaria, the main directions in the development of modern trade and the links between trade and transport have been studied and assessed.

7. Models for maximizing the total amount of work performed in the transport sector, minimizing transport costs and optimizing the structure of passenger transport have been tested.

8. The current trends in the development of all modes of freight transport have been studied and analysed, as well as the state and development of passenger transport in Bulgaria by mode of transport, considering their specifics. Possibilities for optimizing the various transport alternatives and their importance for the efficiency of logistics processes in the country have been argued.

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

Assoc. prof. dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has achieved significant results in her scientific work, having actively participated in 29 scientific forums, led 2 and participated in 2 research projects. In addition, she actively contributes to the development of science as a member of the Union of Scientists - Varna, Economic Sciences Section, and the Territorial Organization of Scientific and Technical Unions in Varna, and as a member of the scientific and editorial boards of three conferences as well.



## 8. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the educational and lecturing activity

Assoc. prof. dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has 21 years of experience as a lecturer at UE-Varna. During this period, she had classes in the Bachelor's and Master's degrees in 19 disciplines in the fields of logistics, transport, commerce, hospitality and restaurant management, and small business. Assoc. prof. dr. Zhelyazkova works actively with students in terms of the development of joint publications. She is the head of the specialty "Management of the Hospitality and Restaurant Business" at the Centre for Continuing Education of UE-Varna and conducts training at the centre. The candidate's accumulated experience as a lecturer in the field of higher education is fully sufficient to occupy the competitive position.

## 9. Others

Assoc. prof. dr. Zhelyazkova contributes to the development of UE-Varna as Deputy Head of the Department of Economics and Management of Commerce and Services since 2023 and as a member of the General Assembly, the Control Council and the Central Competition Commission of UE-Varna, as well as of the General Assembly, the Faculty Council and the Attestation Commission of the Faculty of Economics. These activities are important not only for the university, but also emphasize the high professionalism and commitment of assoc. prof. dr. Zhelyazkova in the academic environment.

## 10. Critical notes, questions and recommendations

I recommend that the candidate continue to develop her research activities towards exploring new sustainable transport technologies and practices, as well as opportunities to minimize carbon emissions in transport as part of the global efforts for environmental sustainability. Developing innovations in this context can be useful for applied research in business and for increasing the competitiveness of transport companies.

## 11. Conclusion

The candidate for the academic position of professor - assoc. prof. dr. Donka Vasileva Zhelyazkova, fully meets the requirements set at the national and university level for holding this position. Her scientific works cover important and current topics in logistics practice, and are developed at a high academic level. Her achievements in research and teaching activities deserve high praise. Based on these results, I recommend that the members of the scientific jury *support the election of assoc. prof. dr. Donka Vasileva Zhelyazkova for holding the academic position of professor in the professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)", at the University of Economics - Varna.*

10.03.2025  
Sofia

Reviewer:

Заличена информация съгласно  
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679  
(Prof. Dr. Miroslava Rakovska)

## OPINION

**on the competition for the academic position of "Professor" in the professional field of "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" at the University of Economics - Varna (SG, issue 105/13.12.2024)**

**1. General information**

**The opinion is prepared by:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeonka Aleksandrova Petrova, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov, Department of Commerce, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty 05.02.18 "Economics and Management (Trade)".

**Grounds for preparing the opinion:** Order of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna No. RD 06-25/28.01.2025 on the appointment of the Scientific Jury, on the basis of Art. 4 in connection with Art. 29a (1) of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 7, para. 2 and Art. 123, para. 3 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna and Decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics (Minutes No. 19/23.01.2025), and according to the Notification Letter for the decisions of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury on the competition, held on 18.02.2025 in accordance with Art. 4, para. 8 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and Art. 124, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna.

**2. Information about the competition**

On the basis of Art. 3, para. 1 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the competition for the academic position "professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" - one, for the needs of the Department "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the University of Economics - Varna, was announced in the State Gazette, issue 105/13.12.2024.

**3. Candidate for the competition**

Within the established deadline, 1 (one) candidate submitted documents for participation in the announced competition - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova. The only candidate convincingly meets the Minimum National Requirements for occupying the academic position "professor" in the professional field for which the competition is announced, according to Art. 26, para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova repeatedly meets the additional quantitative requirements for occupying the academic position "professor", according to Art. 118 (2), p. 6 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna, pursuant to Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

#### 4. Data about the candidate

The candidate for the academic position of "professor" - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, has been working as a lecturer in the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna from 2005 to the present. She successfully defended her dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in 2003 in the scientific specialty 05.02.18 Economics and Management (Trade), with Diploma No. 28784/08.01.2004, issued by the Higher Attestation Commission, city of Sofia. In 2011, she acquired the academic position of "associate professor" in Economics and Management (Logistics), with Certificate No. D010/16.12.2011, which is in accordance with the requirements of Art. 118, para. 2, item 1 and 2 of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna. The areas of scientific interests of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova are related to: transport logistics; logistics; customer logistics; international trade; international logistics. Since 2017, she has been a member of the Union of Scientists - Varna, section "Economic Sciences".

#### 5. Description of scientific works

During the period of her teaching and research activities, from 2005 to 2024, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has developed 103 publications. Her h-index (citation index) in Scopus is 1. In the current competition for the academic position of "professor", in the field of higher education Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, in the scientific specialty Economics and Management (transport logistics), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova participated in a total of 70 publications with 1788 pages, of which: 50 publications with 1549 pages are independent; 20 publications with 239 pages – are co-authored. The structure of the presented publications is as follows:

- **Monographs** – 4 pcs., including: 2 pcs. independent monographs; 2 pcs. monographs in co-authorship.
- **Studies** – 12 pcs., including: 7 pcs. independent studies; 5 pcs. studies in co-authorship. A total of 4 pcs. studies – 3 pcs. in English, of which 1 pc. in co-authorship, and 1 pc. – in Bulgarian, have been published in the refereed and indexed, world-famous Scopus database.
- **Scientific articles** – 21 pcs., 18 pcs. – independent and 3 pcs. – in co-authorship.
- **Scientific reports** – 29 pcs., 20 pcs. – independent and 9 pcs. – in co-authorship.
- **Textbooks and teaching aids** – 3 pcs., 2 pcs. – independent and 1 pc. – in co-authorship.
- **Other publications** – 1 pc. (independent).

In terms of content, the presented publications, reflecting the research activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, are in line with the topic of the announced

competition and cover the following more significant research problems: analyzing and assessing the state and trends in the development of the transport services market in Bulgaria, localizing emerging problems and outlining directions for future development; tracking the dynamics in the development of passenger transport alternatives that shape the supply of the transport market in Bulgaria - rail, bus, air, water and urban electric transport; effects of the activities of organizations providing courier services and carrying out retail trade outside the commercial establishments of the Bulgarian economy; optimizing economic processes in the production and transport system of the enterprise; role of technologies as a means of improving energy efficiency in transport in Bulgaria; global and regional dimensions of transport; sustainable development of transport in the European Union and in Bulgaria; development of the logistics sector of Bulgaria; economic analyses in the field of international logistics; status of regional transport potential by modes of transport; stages in the development of international trade relations, etc.

**The monographic work** of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova on the topic: "Status and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria" was reviewed by two habilitated reviewers and published in 2023 in a specialized scientific publication "Science and Economics" of the University of Economics - Varna, Library "Prof. Tsani Kalyandzhiev", book. 90, ISBN 978-954-21-1158-0, in a volume of 152 pages.

The monographic development presents the research results achieved from an in-depth theoretical, methodological and empirical study of the transport services market in Bulgaria. The practical usefulness of the study is expressed in the interpretation of problems and prospects for the development of the studied market, related to both conventional development approaches and innovative practices of the modern digital transformation of the economy and society.

In the **first chapter** of the monographic work: systematization and determination of the positions of various authors on the essence and scope of the transport services market, carried out on the basis of a confirmed and rejected hypothesis of identity in the use of the concepts "transport services market" and "transport market"; the features of the transport services market are outlined, the elements of the operating self-regulation mechanism are highlighted - applied principles of pricing, competition, specialization of participants in the transport services market, differentiation, etc.; A methodology for studying the state and development of the transport services market is presented, which is supplemented with indicators for measuring the state of the transport infrastructure by mode of transport.

The **second chapter** is devoted to studying the state of the transport services market in Bulgaria during the period 2012-2021. The most important characteristics of the "Transport, Warehousing and Post" sector in Bulgaria are presented. An economic analysis of significant indicators of the transport market is carried out. The main development trends that emerged within the assessed period in the individual market segments are formulated. A review of the state of the enterprises offering transport services in Bulgaria is carried out. A study of the state of the transport infrastructure in Bulgaria is carried out.



The **third chapter** of the monographic work presents problems, opportunities and prospects for development facing the transport services market in Bulgaria. Strategic solutions are sought for the development of the studied national market and its better integration into the transport network of Europe.

In its content, the monographic work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova is developed in a high scientific style and is dedicated to a current and significant scientific and practical problem. The content of the work has the necessary scientific value of an independent and appropriately constructed methodological study. The volume and structure of the monograph sufficiently correspond to the research goal set by the author, which provides a basis for achieving the desired completeness.

Directly related to the direction of the announced competition is the **second monograph** of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova - "Global and Regional Dimensions of Transport", published by the University Publishing House "Science and Economics" of the University of Economics - Varna, 2015, with a volume of 348 pages. In it, the author presents theoretical foundations of transport in the context of transport logistics, observing the boundaries of the logistics system. Economically significant indicators for studying the state of the transport sector are systematized. A mathematical model for optimizing the total amount of work performed by freight transport is being developed and tested. As a result of the analyses performed, conclusions and prospects for the development of individual modes of transport, including important infrastructure solutions, are formulated.

From the Report on the implementation of the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor", it is evident that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova is a **co-author of two monographic works** related to the topic of the announced competition, as follows: "Optimization of economic processes in the production and transport system of the enterprise", Library "Prof. Tsani Kalyandzhiev", Varna: "Science and Economics", book 62, 197 p., chapter one, p. 16-63., published in 2019; "Impact of the Digitalization of Trade on the Economic Development of Bulgaria and the Regions", Library "Prof. Tsani Kalyandzhiev", Varna: "Science and Economics", book 70, 254 p., chapter eight, p. 186 – 208, published in 2021.

The reading of the studies, scientific articles and reports, in a total volume of 780 pages, allows systematization of their thematic content and highlighting of the candidate's primary research interest in the scientific field of transport logistics. The conducted scientific research is supplemented by developments examining the problems of trade, including international trade relations, customer service and couriers.

**In their entirety, the total number** and content of the publications submitted for review by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, for participation in a competition for a "professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)", are a significant scientometric indicator reflecting the scientific results and their impact in the scientific literature. The candidate's publications meet and exceed the quantitative requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor" at the University of Economics - Varna, determined on the basis of Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The publications comply 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 University of Economics - Varna.

## 6. Identification of contributions

The in-depth review of the publications submitted by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova in the competition for the academic position of "professor" gives me reason **to accept** and convincingly confirm the correct and expedient formulation by the candidate of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions of a theoretical and practical-applied nature. More significant contributions in highlighted areas are as follows:

- Theoretical contributions - the theory regarding the essence and features of the transport services market is further developed and enriched; a methodology for a comprehensive study of basic indicators characterizing the demand and supply of transport services in the freight transport segment is proposed and adapted; the existing knowledge about the content and structure of the logistics of the transport process is enriched, including the author's position is expressed, as well as theoretical statements revealing modern solutions in transport are presented; research positions regarding the place of transport in the circular economy are supplemented; theoretical knowledge is further developed with methodologies for studying the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale; scientific knowledge in the field of service quality management at the company level is expanded.
- Practical contributions – overall, basic indicators characterizing the demand and supply of transport services in Bulgaria are studied, as well as the national provision of transport infrastructure built for a separate type of transport; serious problems accompanying the development of the transport services market in the country are outlined, affecting the organization of the movement of freight flows and the objective state of the transport infrastructure; methodologies are applied for studying the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale, to study the impact of transport on the development of the circular economy; comparative studies of courier companies operating in Bulgaria are carried out, of the economic effects of their activities, as well as of the manifestations under the influence of digitalization; a methodology is developed and the problems of concentration in the logistics sector of Bulgaria are determined; models are tested to maximize the total amount of work performed in the transport sector, to solve a transport problem to minimize transport costs, as well as to optimize the structure of passenger transport; connections between trade and transport are examined as a key logistical function; the state and development of passenger transport in Bulgaria by mode of transport are studied, taking into account the specifics of the transport market; current dimensions in the development of transport alternatives used in freight transport are studied and argued.

The scientific and applied scientific contributions of a theoretical and practical nature thus derived allow the summary that through her scientific publications, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova **develops and enriches** the scientific research direction for studying transport logistics, as well as the set of processes in logistics necessary for the

development of transport as a significant economic sector. The cited publications are characterized by problem-oriented and purposeful research conducted by the candidate.

The Citations Report shows that a total of 67 citations of the scientific publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova have been found, of which 4 are cited in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information - Scopus. The found citations are positive arguments for recognition of the candidate's author's positions in the field of transport logistics theory, expressed in monographs, studies, scientific articles and reports.

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

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has participated in a total of 3 research projects related to the topic of the competition. In 1 of them, the candidate is the leader. Results of the candidate's participation in the above projects have been registered and reflected in scientific publications. The successful completion of 3 projects is associated with the publication of 1 independent monograph and 2 monographs in co-authorship. Recognition for the candidate is membership in the scientific and editorial board of 4 collections of reports from scientific conferences.

## **8. Teaching work**

The teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova includes 11 academic disciplines in the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs at the University of Economics - Varna. To ensure the educational process, the candidate participated in the development of 9 co-authored curricula, in the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, and in 5 co-authored curricula, in the Master's degree programs. She is the scientific supervisor of 2 successfully defended doctoral students and 1 in the process of training. To support the research activities of students and doctoral students, the candidate participated in the writing of 4 co-authored publications.

## **9. Others**

In her professional development, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has held a number of leadership positions, such as: member of the General Assembly of the University of Economics - Varna; member of the General Assembly of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna, member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna, member of the Attestation Commission at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna, member of the Central Competition Commission of the University of Economics - Varna, member of the Control Council of the University of Economics - Varna.

The candidate was a member of the Bulgarian Logistics Association. She is currently a member of the Territorial Organization of the Scientific and Technical Unions - Varna, as well as of the Union of Scientists - Varna, section "Economic Sciences".

## 10. Plagiarism

No plagiarism, incorrect use of data or incorrect reference to other scientific works has been found in the materials submitted by the candidate under the announced competition.

## 11. Critical notes

The scientific research qualities of the publications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova in the announced competition for the academic position of "professor" are undeniable. For this reason, I link my notes and recommendations to the candidate with her future scientific development: in order to achieve wider popularization of the conducted research, I recommend that the results be published in international scientific journals with an impact factor and/or impact rank.

## 12. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comprehensive quantitative, qualitative and structural assessment of the materials presented by the candidate in the competition, the undeniable scientific and scientific-applied contributions in scientific publications, numerous participation in scientific projects and scientific forums, teaching activities, development of curricula, support for the scientific research activities of students and doctoral students, membership in scientific organizations, editorial boards and other professional achievements prove that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova convincingly meets both the Minimum National Requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" in the professional field for which the competition is announced, according to Art. 26, para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, and the additional quantitative requirements, according to Art. 118 (2), item 6 of the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna, in accordance with Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The assessment of the research and teaching qualities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova allows us to summarize that she has a justified and irrefutable contribution to the academic values of the University of Economics - Varna and the development of the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services".

Based on the above, I confidently propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to make a decision **"FOR" the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova to the academic position of "Professor"** in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics) at the University of Economics - Varna.

Town of Svishtov,

04 April 2025

The opinion is prepared by:

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

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simconka Petrova)

## OPINION

on a competition for the academic position of "professor"

Professional field: 3.8 Economics Scientific specialty: "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)"

**1. General information**

- Prepared by: Prof. Dr. Dancho Yankov Danchev, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Trade)", Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the University of Economics - Varna.

- Grounds for preparing the opinion: decision of the scientific jury of 18.02.2025. and order of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna RD-06-25/28.01.2025.

**2. Information about the competition**

- Field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences

- Professional field: 3.8 Economics

- Faculty for the needs of which the competition is announced: Faculty of Economics

- Department for the needs of which the competition is announced: Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the University of Economics - Varna

- Issue and date of the State Gazette in which the competition is announced: 105/13.12.2024.

**3. Candidate for the competition**

The only candidate for the competition for "professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova from the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the University of Economics - Varna.

The one presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova's scientific output in terms of quantity and quality corresponds to and exceeds the minimum national requirements for the academic position of "professor" in the field of higher education in which the competition was announced, according to Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, which is illustrated in the following table:

Indicators	Minimum required points by groups of indicators for occupying the academic position of "professor" in the professional field 3.8 Economics (according to Act on the Development	Declared points by the candidate

	of the Academic Staff in (the Republic of Bulgaria)	
Dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"	50	50
Habilitation thesis - monograph	100	100
<b>Sum of indicators 4 to 10, incl.</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>788.32</b>
- Published monograph not presented as a main habilitation work	100	100
- Articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes	10/ more	413.32
- Studies published in scientific publications, refereed and indexed in global databases	45/ more	157.5
- Studies published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes	15/ more	77.5
- Published chapter of a collective monograph	20/ more	40
<b>Sum of indicators from 11 to 13, including</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>460</b>
- Citations in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in global databases	15	60
- Citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review - Citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review	10	160
- Citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review	5	240
<b>Sum of indicators from 14 to the end, incl.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>286.67</b>
- Supervision of a successfully defended doctoral student	40/ more	80
- Participation in a national scientific or educational project	15	60
- Supervision of a national scientific or educational project	30	60
- Published university textbook	40/ more	80
- Published university teaching aid	20/ more	6.67

The candidate fulfills 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:

№	Indicators	points for "professor"	Declared points by the candidate
1	Scientific reports	60	238.32
2	Scientific articles and studies	115	280
3	Publications in Scopus and/or Web of Science	30	157.5
4	Citations in Scopus and/or Web of Science	15	60

5	PhD students who have defended their dissertations	40	80
6	Research projects (participation and/or leadership)	15	120

According to the submitted reference-declaration, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has fulfilled and quantitatively significantly exceeds the minimum national quantitative requirements in general and according to the individual criteria, as well as the additional requirements of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Economics - Varna.

#### **4. Data about the candidate (personal characteristics)**

The candidate for the competition for "professor" holds a diploma for the Educational and scientific degree "Doctor" No. 28784/08.01.2004 and a certificate for the academic position "associate professor" No. D 010/16.12.2011.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova meets the requirements in Art. 118, para. 2, items 1 and 2 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Economics - Varna - holds the educational scientific degree of "Doctor" and has held the academic position "associate professor" for no less than two academic years at the same higher education institution.

The candidate for participation in the competition during the period 1993-1997 was a student at the University of Economics - Varna with a bachelor's degree in "Economics of Trade", during the period 1997-1998 she completed a master's program in "Economics of Trade", and during the period 2000-2003 she was a doctoral student in the doctoral program "Economics and Management (Trade)" at the University of Economics - Varna. During the period 2004-2005 she worked as an office assistant at a private professional college "Ecomintellect" EOOD - Varna. From 2004 to 2005 she was a part-time assistant and in 2005 she joined the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the University of Economics - Varna, where her professional development continues as an associate professor (2011 - present). The main scientific interests of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova are in the field of transport logistics, logistics, customer logistics, international trade and logistics.

#### **5. Description of scientific works**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova meets the requirements of Art. 118, para. 2 items 3-6 in connection with Art. 129 of the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna.

The total number of publications of the candidate for "professor" is 103, including 5 monographs (3 independent), 14 studies (9 independent), 30 scientific articles (24 independent), 46 scientific reports (35 independent), 4 textbooks (2 independent), 3 teaching aids (1 independent) and 1 other publication.

A total of 5 publications are included in the world-famous Scopus referencing and indexing database – 5 studies (3 independent and 2 co-authored).

In this competition, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova participates with some of the above-mentioned publications – a total of 70, which are presented in the following table:

Type of scientific publications	Totally (p.)	Incl.	
		Independent	In refereed and indexed publications in world-renowned databases
Monographs	4	2	-
Studies	12	7	4
Scientific articles	21	18	-
Scientific reports	29	20	-
Textbooks and teaching aids	3	2	-
Other publications	1	1	-
<b>Totally</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>4</b>

Fifty of the works submitted for the competition are independent publications, including 9 monographs and studies, 18 scientific articles, 20 scientific reports. In addition, the candidate has submitted another 20 collective publications in which she participated. Four studies have been published in English and are referenced and indexed in the world-famous scientific information database Scopus. The majority of the remaining publications are included in a number of other referencing and evaluation systems, and some publications are directly related to teaching and learning activities.

To participate in the competition for "professor" Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has submitted one of the independent monographs entitled "State and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria" with a total volume of 152 pages as the main habilitation work. The monographic work meets the requirements, as it has been published in a specialized scientific publishing house, has been discussed in the primary 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 the acquisition of an educational and scientific degree "doctor" and for occupying an academic position "associate professor" (in accordance with the requirements of Art. 118, para. 2, item



4 and Art. 129, para. 2 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria of the University of Economics - Varna).

The habilitation work (Publication 1.1) presents the author's point of view in understanding the problems in the field of the transport services market, revealing its essence, features and methodology for studying its condition and development. Based on the theoretical summaries conducted, the transport services market in Bulgaria is studied during the period 2012 - 2021, and discusses problems and prospects for the development of the transport services market in Bulgaria.

The monograph provides a theoretical overview of the nature and features of the transport services market and, based on an analysis of the state and trends in its development in Bulgaria, localizes problems and outlines guidelines for its future development. In accordance with the set goal of the study, three structural units are distinguished, logically interconnected. The first chapter defines the theoretical foundations of the transport services market, and based on an in-depth review of the specialized literature, its nature and features are deduced. The second chapter is dedicated to the author's research interest in the current state of the transport services market in Bulgaria, tracking its dynamic development based on basic economic indicators at comparable prices for the "Transport, warehousing and mail" sector in Bulgaria for the period 2012 - 2020. The third chapter is of a practical and applied nature and outlines some problems, opportunities and prospects for the development of the transport services market in Bulgaria, related to both conventional development approaches and innovative practices falling within the scope of the modern digital transformation of processes and society.

The monograph "Global and Regional Dimensions of Transport" (Publication 14.13) provides generalizations on the theoretical foundations of transport in the context of transport logistics and within the boundaries of the logistics system, while at the same time specifying some features of modern solutions and systematizing indicators for studying the state of the transport sector. An empirical study of the current state of transport on an international, national and regional scale has been conducted, based on a system of indicators that are chronologically and logically linked in order to systematize problems and localize development opportunities in the field of transport at the international, national and regional levels. As a result of the analyses, conclusions and prospects for the development of individual modes of transport have been formulated, related to multi-faceted strategic opportunities, which include both potential directions in the organization of transport and important infrastructure decisions.

I accept not only the habilitation thesis and the other monographs mentioned, but also all the publications presented as having a direct or indirect relationship to the competition for "professor".

The above gives grounds to conclude that the scientific production presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova for participation in the competition for "professor" in 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 scientific publications submitted by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova for participation in the competition for "professor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)", scientific contributions of a theoretical, methodological and scientifically applied nature can be identified:

##### *Main theoretical contributions*

1. The theory regarding the essence and features of the transport services market has been summarized and further developed.
2. The existing knowledge in the field of transport and the content and structure of the logistics of the transport process has been enriched.
3. The theoretical propositions regarding the place of transport in the circular economy, transport and logistics systems and supply chains have been supplemented.
4. Scientific knowledge in the field of service quality management at the company level has been further developed.

##### *Main methodological contributions*

1. 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.
2. Methodologies have been developed 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.
3. A methodology has been developed and comparative studies have been carried out on the problems of concentration in the logistics sector of Bulgaria.

##### *Main scientific and applied contributions*

1. A comprehensive study of key indicators characterizing the demand and supply of transport services in Bulgaria, as well as the national provision of transport infrastructure

2. 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 have been studied.
3. In a comparative plan, courier companies operating in Bulgaria, the effects of their activities in relation to organizations carrying out retail trade outside of retail outlets and the impact of digitalization in trade on their activities were studied.
4. Models of the task for maximizing the total amount of work performed in the transport sector, for minimizing transport costs and a model for optimizing the structure of passenger transport have been tested.
5. The connections between trade and transport, as a key logistical function, the state and development of passenger transport in Bulgaria, the development of all transport alternatives used in freight transport have been studied.

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

In the citations report, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova presents 68 identified citations (probably more), of which 4 are in world-renowned databases (Scopus and Web of Science), 16 are in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review and 48 are in non-refereed journals with scientific review. These citations are expressed in 460 points (with 100 points required) according to the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position of "professor" according to Art. 2b para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova 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 international scale.

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

In the competition for the academic position of "professor", Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova participated with 6 scientific and educational projects (including 2 as a supervisor), of which 3 projects ended with the publication of monographs, 2 with the publication of a collection of reports and 1 project was related to the development of a doctoral dissertation.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova was a member of a number of editorial boards for conducting scientific forums.

## **9. Teaching work**

When assessing the teaching work of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova, the requirements of Art. 129, para. 5, item 1 of the Academic Staff Development Regulations of the University of Economics - Varna and of art. 29b, para. 3, item 1 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria are taken into account.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has been working as a full-time lecturer at the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" of the University of Economics - Varna for 20 years - part-time assistant (2004-2005), chief assistant since 2005 and associate professor since 2011. The pedagogical experience of the candidate is in accordance with the subject of the competition for "professor". The teaching and teaching activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova - in terms of duration and quality - correspond to the requirements of this competition.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova is an established lecturer in various academic disciplines in various forms of education and qualification levels, including full-time and distance learning for bachelors, masters and doctoral students, which cover the subject matter of the announced competition for the academic position of "professor".

From the submitted report it is clear that in the academic year 2022/2023, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova led lecture courses in the educational and qualification degree "Bachelor" with a total of 207 hours in the disciplines "Logistics", "Transport Logistics" "Logistics Customer Service" and lecture courses in the educational and qualification degree "Master" with a total of 21 hours in the disciplines "International Logistics" and "Distribution Logistics". In the academic year 2023/2024 the teaching load of the candidate for "professor" is 217 hours in the above-mentioned disciplines, and in the Educational and Qualification Degree "Master" the teaching load is 45 hours, with the above-mentioned disciplines being supplemented with "International Trade and Logistics".

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova participates in the development of curricula for training students in the specialties "Economics and Trade", "Logistics", "Logistics Management" and a number of other specialties at the University of Economics - Varna. She independently or as a co-author participated in the development of 3 textbooks and teaching aids. She has led teams participating in the Student Scientific Sessions at the University of Economics - Varna. She is a scientific supervisor of graduates in the Educational and Qualification Degree "Bachelor" and the Educational and Qualification Degree "Master".

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova participates in the doctoral program in "Economics and Management (Trade)" with the discipline "Trade Marketing and Logistics".

She is the scientific supervisor of 3 doctoral students in the doctoral program, of which 2 have successfully defended their dissertations and 1 is in the process of studying. She is the head of 1 scientific project to support the development of doctoral dissertations. She has 4 joint publications with students and doctoral students.

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

In accordance with the requirements of Art. 129, para. 5, item 3 of the Academic Staff Development Regulations of the University of Economics - Varna, it should be emphasized that in her professional development, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova holds a number of administrative positions, such as: Deputy Head of the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" (2023 - present), member of the Faculty of Economics (2012 - present), member of the General Assembly of the University of Economics - Varna (2012 - present), member of the General Assembly of the Faculty of Economics (2012 - present), member of the Attestation Commission of the Faculty of Economics at the University of Economics - Varna (2023-2026), member of the Control Council of the University of Economics - Varna (2016-2019). Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova is a member of the Scientific and technical union and the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, she was a member of the Bulgarian Logistics Association (2017-2019).

#### **11. Plagiarism**

When familiarizing myself with and analyzing the scientific production of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova, I have not identified plagiarism, incorrect data and incorrect references to foreign scientific works.

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

In accordance with the provisions of Art. 130 of the Academic Staff Development Regulations of the University of Economics - Varna, the following question may be asked to the candidate for the academic position of "professor":

1. What is the candidate's opinion about the trajectory in the future development of modern logistics in the conditions of digitalization?

#### **13. Conclusion**

After familiarizing myself with and analyzing the scientific research and teaching activities of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova, it can be concluded that the candidate for the academic position of "professor" meets the following conditions and requirements:

1. has acquired the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in 2004;
2. has held the academic position of "associate professor" at the University of Economics - Varna, for no less than two academic years.

3. 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 of "associate professor":

4. meets and exceeds the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" according to Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of the 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 on the basis of Art. 2b, para. 5 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria

6. there is no plagiarism proven in the scientific works in accordance with the established procedure.

This gives me reason to express my full and unreserved support and categorically positive attitude towards the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova for the academic position of "professor" in the professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)". This also determines my categorical final decision, which is an uncompromising **"YES"**.

April 2025  
Varna

Member of the scientific jury

(Prof. Dr. Dancho Danchev)

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

## OPINION

**From:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Plamena Nikolova Milusheva, habilitated in professional field 3.8 "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Supply Logistics)", University of Economics - Varna

**Subject:** competition for occupying the academic position "professor" at the University of Economics - Varna / decision of a scientific jury, appointed by order of the rector of the University of Economics - Varna No. RD 06-25/28.01.2025

### 1. Information about the competition

The competition was announced in the State Gazette, issue 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.

### 2. Candidate in the competition

Only one candidate participated in the competition for the academic position of "professor": Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, full-time lecturer in the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Varna. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova has provided the necessary evidence of fulfillment of both the requirements specified in Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for holding the academic position of "professor", and the quantitative requirements of the University of Economics - Varna (based on Art. 26, para. 5 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria).

### 3. Candidate data (personal characteristics):

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova has been a lecturer at the University of Economics - Varna since 2005. She obtained the scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty 05.02.18 "Economics and Management (Trade)" in 2004 after successfully defending a doctoral dissertation on the topic "Integrated Management of Distribution Activities /on the Example of the Soda Ash Plant - Devnya/". Since 2011, she has been appointed to the position of "associate professor". She has been holding the position of deputy head of the Department of "Economics and Management of Trade and Services" since 2023.

The candidate's areas of scientific interest are in the field of the announced competition - transport logistics, logistics, customer logistics, international trade and international logistics.

The candidate in the competition presents numerous participations in editorial boards, scientific organizations, university committees, etc. She is fluent in English, Russian and Italian.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova 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 (PRAS).

#### **4. Description of scientific works**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova participates in the competition for the academic position of "professor" in the professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" with 70 publications. The submitted works 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 University of Economics - Varna.

The required number of points to fulfill the minimum national requirements according to Art. 2b of the Academic Staff Development Act is 550 points, and the actual performance by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova with a significant excess is 1714.99 points, as follows by groups of indicators for fulfilling the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "professor".

For participation in the competition, the candidate has submitted:

- defended dissertation 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 according to the Minimum Requirements for Holding the Academic Position "Professor").
- independent monograph /main habilitation thesis/ "State and Trends in the Development of the Transport Services Market in Bulgaria", published in 2023 by the "Science and Economics" Publishing House, University of Economics - Varna. The presented work is 151 pages long. The theoretical foundations of the transport services market are presented in depth. A comprehensive and interesting from a practical point of view study of the state of the transport services market in Bulgaria during the period 2012-2021 is proposed, on the basis of which problems, opportunities and prospects for its development are identified. (100 points);
- a published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "doctor", an independent monograph /not presented as a main habilitation thesis/, 21 articles (including 3 in co-authorship) and 29 reports published in non-refereed journals with



scientific review or published in edited collective volumes, 4 studies published in *Scopus*, 8 studies published in non-refereed journals with scientific review and published chapters of 2 collective monographs. (788, 32 points);

In terms of content, publications by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova predominate, which are mainly focused on the field of transport logistics, and they are supplemented and further developed in works examining the problems of trade, customer service and couriers. The candidate's scientific production is characterized by thoroughness, competence, purposefulness and stylistic consistency. It is noteworthy that 72% of the author's publications are independent developments, which gives reason to take into account the individual contribution to scientific achievements, as well as the ability for team scientific work.

## **5. Identification of contributions**

The significant volume of scientific research of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova in the field of transport logistics has contributed to the identification of a number of significant contributions to theory and practice, namely:

### **Theoretical contributions**

- The theory on 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 the main indicators characterizing the demand and supply of transport services in the freight transport segment, as well as the provision of transport infrastructure for each type of transport.
- The existing knowledge in the field of transport has been enriched by examining theoretical statements that construct the understanding of the content and structure of the logistics of the transport process, and in a practical and applied plan, theoretical statements that reveal modern solutions in transport under modern economic conditions have been summarized and argued, with a clearly expressed author's position.
- The theoretical statements regarding the place of transport in the circular economy have been supplemented and its role in the scope of transport and logistics systems and supply chains has been highlighted.
- Theoretical knowledge has been further developed with methodologies for studying the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale, for the influence of transport on the development of the circular economy, for the development of final energy consumption in the transport sector, for the sustainable development of the transport system.

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

### **Practical and applied contributions**

- Basic 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, have been comprehensively studied, which has served as the basis for identifying some serious problems that accompany the development of the transport services market in the country, affecting both the organization of the movement of freight flows and the objective state of the transport infrastructure.
- Methods have been applied for studying the state of the transport sector on an international, national and regional scale, for the influence of transport on the development of the circular economy, for the development of final energy consumption in the transport sector, for the sustainable development of the transport system.
- 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.
- A methodology has been developed and comparative studies have been carried out on the problems of concentration in the logistics sector of Bulgaria.
- Models of the task of maximizing the total amount of work performed in the transport sector, of a transport task for minimizing transport costs, of a model for optimizing the structure of passenger transport have been tested.
- Both the connections between trade and transport, as a key logistics function, and the main directions in the development of modern trade have been examined.
- The state and development of passenger transport in Bulgaria by mode of transport have been studied, taking into account the specifics of this transport market.
- Current dimensions in the development of all transport alternatives used in freight transport are researched and argued: water (sea and river), rail, air, pipeline and road transport.

The large number of citations of the candidate's works in scientific publications, namely: 4 citations in scientific publications referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information (Scopus or Web of Science); 16 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review; 48 citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review, bring the

candidate /460 points/, which significantly exceed the minimum requirements of /100 points/, is an indicator of the recognition of the specialist Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova, not only among Bulgarian, but also among foreign authors.

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

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova participates in 6 national projects, two of which she is the head. She has been a member of the scientific and editorial board of the Student Scientific Session in the Department of Economics and Management of Trade and Services. She has been a member of the Union of Scientists - Varna, Section "Economic Sciences" since 2017 and of the Territorial Organization of Scientific and Technical Unions - Varna since 2007. During the period 2017-2018, she was a member of the Bulgarian Logistics Association.

### **6. Teaching work**

The teaching activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova covers courses in the Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in full-time and distance learning. The provided references for the candidate's academic workload during the last 2 academic years - 2022/2023 and 2023/2024. testify that she mainly teaches disciplines in the field of this competition, namely: Transport Logistics at Bachelor's and Master's degrees, Logistics Customer Service at Bachelor's degrees and others. Over the years, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhelyazkova has developed 9 curricula at the Bachelor's and 5 at the Master's degrees.

For the competition, the candidate presents 2 independent textbooks /Transport Logistics and Logistics Customer Service/ and participation in 1 teaching aid.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhelyazkova is a scientific supervisor of three doctoral students, two of whom have successfully defended their doctoral degrees. The candidate's active work with doctoral students and students is also evidenced by 4 co-authored publications.

### **7. Others**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova from 2012 to the present is a member of the General Assembly of the University of Economics - Varna, a member of the General Assembly of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna and a member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna. From 2023 to 2015 she is a member of the Attestation Commission at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Economics - Varna. She was a member of the Central Competition Commission of the University of Economics - Varna during the period 2016 - 2023. In 2016 -

2019 she was also a member of the Control Council of the University of Economics - Varna.

### **8. Plagiarism**

There is no plagiarism proven in accordance with the statutory procedure in the works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Zhelyazkova. The candidate has provided a declaration of originality.

### **9. Critical remarks**

I have no critical remarks.

### **10. Conclusion**

The creative and professional path demonstrated to date, as well as the analysis of the scientific, teaching and administrative activities based on the documents submitted by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova, gives reason to claim that all the 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. Evaluating the quantity, type, content and quality of publications, I am convinced that the candidate meets 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 recommend to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to support the proposal that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Donka Dimitrova Zhelyazkova to be confirmed for the academic position of "professor" in professional field 3.8 "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Transport Logistics)" at the University of Economics - Varna.

Date: 03.04.2025

City of Varna

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

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Plamena Nikolova Milusheva/