O P I N I O N

From: Prof. Dr. **Valentina Lyubenova Nikolova-Alexieva,**
University of Food Technology - Plovdiv,
Professional field 3.8 . Economic, Scientific specialty "Economics and Management" (Business Economics and corporate governance)

Subject: competition for **Associate Professor** in a district on higher Education 3. Social , economic and legal sciences , professional Direction 3.8 . Economics , scientific specialty "Regional Economy and Sustainable Development ", announced from HSARD -Plovdiv

1. Competition information

The competition has been announced for needs on Department "Regional Development, Agribusiness and Tourism" at Faculty by economics and management in the State Gazette, issue №. 50/20.06.2025. In the composition on scientific jury by the competition participate, according to Order No. RAS-54/18.08.2025 of The Rector of HSARD –Plovdiv.

2. General characteristic on scientific research and applied science activity on the candidate .

The candidate **Dr. Delyan Kostadinov Plachkov** has submitted a total of 9 scientific papers, in addition to those used for the Educational and scientific degree (ESD) "Doctor". Their structure is as follows:

- ✓ Monograph - **1 pcs** (independent);
- ✓ Book based on dissertation work – **1 pcs** (independent);
- ✓ Articles - **3 pcs** . (independent , published in refereed and indexed editions by SCOPUS / Web) of Science, in English);
- ✓ Reports – **4 pcs** (of which one in Bulgarian and three in English, three independent and one co-authored, published in non-refereed journals with scientific review);

The following are also presented for participation in the competition:

- ✓ Citations in publications referenced and indexed in SCOPUS / Web of Science – 1 **pcs**.
- ✓ Citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review – **7 pcs.**

*According to the attached report with scientometric indicators, the scientific production of Dr. Delyan Kostadinov Plachkov meets the national minimum requirements for holding the academic position " **Associate Professor"** in Scientific Area 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.8. Economics.*

No.	Indicator group	*Number of points*

		Required points for Associate Professor	*Points scored D. Plachkov*
1	A	50	50
2	B	-	-
3	C	100	100
4	G	200	205
5	D	50	50
6	E	-	-
	TOTAL:	**400**	**405**

2.1. Fulfillment of quantitative requirements

The candidate meets all mandatory conditions under Art. 24 of ZRASRB and the additional requirements of the HSARD, pursuant to Art. 15, para. 1 of the ZRASRB and Art. 53 of the PPZRASRB.

Regarding the requirement for an acquired ESD "Doctor " (*Art. 53, para. 1 of the PPZRASRB*) - in 2023, Dr. Delyan Plachkov defends a dissertation at the HSARD - Plovdiv on the topic: " *Financial instruments for managing risk in the context of the common agricultural policy of the European Union* ". He obtained the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (diploma No. 021/19.05.2023) in Professional field: 3.8.Economics.

Regarding the requirement for minimum academic experience (Art. 53. para. 2 of the PPZRASRB) - the total work experience of Dr. Plachkov at the HSARD is about 8 years. He was appointed as an assistant in February 2023, and in July 2024, after winning a competition, he was appointed as a chief assistant. Apparently, the candidate *fully meets the legal requirement for a minimum academic experience of two years.*

Regarding the requirement for a published monographic work (Art. 53. para. 3 of the PPZRASRB) – the candidate has presented a habilitation thesis on the topic " The Role on the artificial intellect for digitalization and transformation on educational processes". The work was reviewed by two highly respected reviewers in scientific circles, and was published in 2025 in the renowned publishing house "Talant" - Plovdiv. The topic of the monographic work, the object, the subject and the time period to which it refers, do not imply overlap with the candidate's dissertation work, which meets the legal requirement of Art. 24, para. 1, item 3 of the ZRASRB.

With regard to the requirement to meet the relevant minimum national criteria and the requirements under Art. 1a, para. 2; (Art. 53. para. 4 of the PPZRASRB) - the candidate has achieved a total of 405 points (from indicators: A- 50 points; B-100 points; D-205 points; D- 50 points), which exceeds the required threshold of 400 points.

Regarding the requirement that there be no plagiarism proven in accordance with the statutory procedure in scientific works (Art. 53, para. 5 of the PPZRASRB) - none has been established.

Regarding the additional requirements of the HSARD - Dr. Plachkov meets all additional quantitative requirements, as evident from the attached references.

2.2. Fulfillment of quality requirements

With his active research activity, Delyan Plachkov proves himself to be *a serious researcher* , with excellent scientific and organizational and managerial competencies. An indicator of this is his participation in a number of national and international projects of high

importance for the development of education and science. Among them, INVEST - European University for Sustainable Development, Smart Growth and Inclusive Societies (Erasmus+) stands out, as well as INVEST4EXCELLENCE (Horizon 2020), aimed at building research capacity and sustainability in the field of green economy and digital transformation. Some of these initiatives have already been successfully completed, while others are in the process of implementation and are planned to be completed in 2026 and 2027. The BLEVIVET project (Erasmus+) is also significant.

Delyan Plachkov is also *a recognizable researcher* with contributions in the field of financial management and risk management, green and circular economy, digitalization and artificial intelligence in education. He also has *an established image* in the country. His repeated participation in national and international forums is proof of his potential to develop and his desire to affirm his qualities. It is important to note that Dr. Delyan Plachkov also has *proven practical experience*, which strengthens the connection "research - business - university".

Based on all of the above, regarding the diverse and in-depth teaching and research work of Dr. Plachkov, I believe that ***he meets the quantitative and qualitative requirements.*** for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the Higher School of Agribusiness and Regional Development.

3. Evaluation of teaching and learning activities

Dr. Delyan Plachkov has provided teaching workload, which answers on accepted annual standard in the HSARD - Plovdiv. By the specifics on the professional direction are covered the minimum 30 hours lectures .

Dr. Delyan Plachskoz is already established teacher by row disciplines in "Bachelor " and " Master " degree. The reported his auditorium and extracurricular employment through the last 2 educational years is between 5 80 and 600 the hour , which significantly exceeds the mandatory minimum .

Dr. Plachkov enjoys *great authority* among his colleagues and students. He applies modern teaching methods, illustrates the taught material with statistical data from the Internet, and stimulates student activity through interactive teaching methods.

Everything up to this point gives reason to conclude that Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Plachkov has acquired sufficient experience and routine and evidence of professionalism in his teaching work. *It should be noted that he has accumulated practical experience, which reflects on his teaching style and creates additional applied attractiveness of his knowledge.*

4. Basic contributions

The publications contain a number of theoretical, methodological and scientific-applied achievements and contributions of varying degrees of significance for economic science and business practice:

- **<u>Scientific contributions include</u>** :
  - Of interaction between AI and the educational ecosystem *is proposed, including the interrelationships between students, teachers, institutions, and technological solutions.*
  - Of artificial intelligence as a transformational factor in higher education *is substantiated*

through a process model encompassing input, transformational, and output educational processes.

- *The scientific apparatus has been expanded* by defining concepts such as: “AI- supported education", "AI- driven assessment”, “ethical AI in education", "generative AI literacy ".
- A legal challenges of applying AI in education *are systematized, including topics such as personal data protection, algorithm transparency, and academic integrity.*
- *The possibility of integrating generative AI (such as GPT models) into the academic environment is explored ,* with an analysis of its potential for improving teaching, assessment, and administrative activities.

➢ **To scientific and applied Contributions include:**

- *A methodology has been developed for* implementation of AI in education processes, applicable to the system on higher education , consistent with good European practices
- *An analytical tool has been created model* for diagnostics and improvement on educational processes through AI – with separation on the processes by phases: entry (orientation, admission), transformation (training, assessment) and exit (certification, career development).
- *Suggested are applicable strategies* for digitalization and innovation in higher education through integration of AI in platforms training and administration on the school process , including Moodle, with specific scenarios for implementation .
- *Systematized are good practices* from international universities for academically consulting , digital assessment and adaptive training with the help of of AI applicable in Bulgarian conditions .
- *Formulated are practically guidelines* for development of AI -competencies among academic staff and students , including through creation on intra-institutional policies for ethical use on generative AI.

In general, the scientific achievements of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Delyan Plachkov can be attributed to the group of "enrichment of existing knowledge" and "application of new scientific achievements in practice", as well as obtaining new data and facts about studied economic objects.

What has been said so far gives me reason to *conclude* that the works presented by the candidate for the academic position of "Associate Professor" *are sufficient in content and quantity to occupy this position.* In addition, it must be taken into account that the chosen scientific profile meets the need for conducting scientific research and teaching in the indicated scientific specialty.

5. Significance of contributions to science and practice

The candidate's works contain original scientific and applied contributions, a representative part of which has been published in journals and scientific collections published by well-known academic publishing houses. *His theoretical developments have practical applicability, some of*

which are directly oriented towards academic work.

6. Critical remarks and recommendations

Each candidate for "Associate Professor" may be challenged to further evolve their views and scientific ideas, therefore:

- In order to promote his scientific work among the international academic community, I recommend that he increase his publications in refereed and indexed publications in global databases.
- I recommend that the candidate direct his efforts towards preparing and publishing a study (or studies) as a possible in-depth study of a current problem in the field of his scientific interests;
- In order to improve the learning process, I recommend that the candidate make efforts to develop independent textbooks and teaching aids in the disciplines he/she teaches and for which he will be the titular teacher at the HSARD.

These notes should not be perceived as "criticism" and are not of such a nature as to challenge the contributions of the candidate for associate professor. They are a collegial "recommendation" and "encouragement" regarding Delyan Plachkov's upcoming scientific activities and his growth in the academic field.

7. Conclusion

Based on the above, I can summarize that there is a convincing candidacy for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the HSARD- Plovdiv. Delyan Plachkov is a scientist with great potential, combining scientific research with practical and applied activities, and has proven his achievements in teaching and research.

The competition documents testify that both the quantitative and qualitative criteria of the HSARD for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" have been met.

With full conviction, I give my <u>POSITIVE</u> assessment and recommend to the other esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to vote "FOR" awarding the academic position "Associate Professor" to Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Delyan Kostadinov Plachkov, in Scientific Area 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Direction 3.8. Economics, Scientific Specialty "Regional Economy and Sustainable Development".

03.10.2025
Plovdiv

Prepared the opinion:

/ *Prof. Dr. V. Nikolova-Alexieva* /