

## OPINION

By: Assoc. Prof. Eduard Vasilev Marinov, Ph.D., Department of Economics, New Bulgarian University, professional field "3.8. Economics"

on: scientific papers for participation in a competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in field of higher education "3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences", professional field "3.7. Administration and management (Entrepreneurship, competitiveness, business development, artificial intelligence)", announced by the New Bulgarian University in SG no. 44/19.05.2023, with candidate Senior Assistant Professor Juliana Bozhidarova Hadjitchoneva, Ph.D.

### **I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University**

The presented evidentiary materials show compliance with the national minimum requirements and the requirements of the NBU for indicators A and B, while in groups Г and Д the presented significantly exceed them, as well as for the indicators mandatory for the NBU. The review of the evidentiary materials provided by the candidate convinces me that all the quantitative requirements of Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and of the New Bulgarian University for the occupation of the academic position "associate professor" have been met.

### **II. Research activity and results**

1. Evaluation of the monographic work, including evaluation of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the author.

The presented monographic work - "Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Artificial Intelligence in Bulgaria – Dynamics and Management" (2022) fully corresponds to the requirements for a habilitation thesis both in terms of volume and content, as well as relevance, scientific and applied contributions. I should note that it was a real pleasure and privilege for me to be the scientific editor of the monograph.

The monographic work is in-depth and with a clearly expressed contribution character in terms of scientific-theoretical summaries, but also from the point of view of the introduced and tested various scientific-methodological approaches and especially - of the practical value and innovativeness of the results in a scientific-applied plan. The topic is highly interdisciplinary in nature, synergistically combining economic and management theory, methodology and own empirical studies, with the author demonstrating thoroughness and successfully applying various primary and secondary scientific approaches and tools in its development, including and methodological and empirical research tools developed by him . The work is structured in a balanced way.

Dr. Hadjitchoneva demonstrates depth in the study of entrepreneurial and innovation dynamics and its management, drawing on fundamental ideas of economic thought, applying analytical models for ecosystem assessment of development and exploring leading technological and innovative practices and solutions in entrepreneurship and management with a focus on progress in Bulgaria. The author demonstrates scientific maturity and ambition in the realization of an extremely complex interdisciplinary study, which makes it possible to formulate important scientific results with a high degree of practical applicability in the field of practices and management of entrepreneurship and innovation, supplemented by approbation of the results in the brandies of several own field studies.

The work is unique for Bulgaria, and also in an international context - both from a theoretical point of view, in terms of the opportunities that changes in theory and the environment create in terms of entrepreneurship and innovation (and more specifically artificial intelligence), as well as an empirical study of their application and reflection in real business in Bulgaria and the dynamics of their development in recent years.

The following can be highlighted as the main theoretical and practical achievements of Dr. Hadjitchoneva's research:



First, from the point of view of the creation of new knowledge, through an in-depth interdisciplinary study of entrepreneurship, innovation and artificial intelligence, the main economic concepts and theories that form the framework of modern economic and management views and determine the emergence of new entrepreneurial opportunities, threats are summarized and typologized and risks, and therefore determine the potential and limitations of managerial decision-making for entrepreneurship, innovation and business, including and above all in times of crisis and specifically in the Covid-19 pandemic. This enables the candidate to assess and analyze the impacts of the crisis and to systematize some general perspectives on the dynamics and management of entrepreneurship and innovation, drawing conclusions and recommendations for their future development.

Secondly, from the point of view of the systematization and enrichment of scientific knowledge, the applications of the ecosystem approaches for the study and assessment of entrepreneurship and innovation are summarized, compared and critically examined, and an analytical review of the Bulgarian entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem is proposed based on a derived author's model for analysis of the two ecosystems. On this basis, the current approaches to the construction and application of business strategies and strategies for competition through the development and implementation of innovative cognitive technologies are summarized and the general and specific effects of the introduction and use of artificial intelligence innovations for forecasting and decision-making are systematized as recommendation on economic and business policy.

Third, from the perspective of the scientific-applied direction of the research, based on a systematic analysis of a wide range of research, the trends and dynamics for managing the entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems are highlighted, including through the presentation of own empirical studies, global synthetic indices, macro-parameters for growth, business statistics, aggregated data on innovative Bulgarian enterprises and the application of artificial intelligence. This, together with the proposed innovative models to support the management of the modern company in assessing the business value created by the application of innovative solutions and artificial intelligence, including in the implementation of innovative solutions in the sectors of fintech, retail trade and e-commerce, makes it possible to issue substantiated recommendations for the future development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Bulgaria, and more generally - globally.

Without exhausting all the contributing moments of Dr. Hadjitchoneva 's monographic work , in conclusion, it contains contributions that can be characterized as creating new scientific knowledge, supplementing existing knowledge, and having a seriously advocated innovative methodological and scientific applied nature. The monograph has been developed in good faith and in depth, it fully meets and even exceeds in terms of volume, quality and depth the requirements for the content of a monographic work.

## 2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other attached publications made after the appointment of the academic position "Associate Professor".

In his reference, the candidate has presented a small, but sufficient, from ch.t. to the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and NBU, part of his publications from the period after the acquisition of the ONS "doctor" and his appointment to the academic position "principal assistant" - 3 studies and 1 article in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information, 10 studies and 6 articles in peer -reviewed or edited collective volumes and 4 chapters of collective monographs. Dr. Hadjitchoneva's publications are in peer-reviewed periodicals and collective publications.

The problems investigated by the candidate are distinguished by a clearly formulated thesis, in-depth studies and concrete results achieved with generalizations, conclusions and recommendations useful for science and practice, as well as enriching the results already noted in connection with the monographic work regarding entrepreneurship, competitiveness , business development and artificial intelligence , the candidate seriously expands the field of his scientific interests in areas such as international economic relations, consumer experiences and perceptions, sustainable competitiveness at the national level, the interaction between business and public administration, the development of e-government and e-health, the knowledge society and others.

The main scientific and applied contributions in the studies, articles and scientific reports of Dr. Hadjitchoneva can be summarized in a theoretical summary, classification and analysis of various aspects of



entrepreneurship (as a concept and as an ecosystem), competitiveness (at the micro- and macroeconomic level) and the introduction of new technologies in the management and development of business activities (with a focus on artificial intelligence), numerous practical and empirical tests of various techniques and methods for measuring business performance, competitiveness and the use of cognitive technologies and artificial intelligence in business, and many others. It should be noted the courage of the candidate to create, use and approve various new methodological approaches, which are often interdisciplinary, and contribute to the originality of the theoretical, but especially - of the practical-applied results of her research, which are clearly expressed in all publications.

Of particular interest are the highly applied research of the candidate in the field of the implementation of innovative technologies and AI in the management and organization of business, as well as in connection with its internationalization, as well as the clear and substantiated recommendations for the possibilities of increasing the national competitiveness of Bulgaria.

### 3. Citation from other authors.

Although the procedure documents indicate a small part of all the citations of the candidate (more than 60), the fact that significantly more than the required citations are indicated in the reference is indicative of the citability of Dr. Hadjitchoneva's publications, being presented as cited in publications in the most prestigious international scientific databases - Scopus and Web of Science, as well as citations by renowned Bulgarian authors in the subject of the candidate's research.

Taking this into account, as well as the fact that citation takes technological time after publication, and most of the featured publications were made in the last few years, it can be assumed that Dr. Hadjitchoneva's citation index will continue to increase significantly in the coming years.

### **III. Teaching and learning activities**

#### 1. In-class and extracurricular activity, work in the electronic training module "MOODLE – NBU", providing student internships, work with students and PhD students.

The presented information on classroom and non-classroom employment show a significant workload in the educational process, which corresponds to and even significantly exceeds the requirements of the NBU for full-time teachers, according to the Regulation on the employment of full-time teachers of the NBU. He teaches in the master's and bachelor's programs of the Administration and Management Department, the Economics Department and the Political Science Department of the NBU - MP "Business Administration" (MBA); MP "Marketing and Management"; MP "Management of human resources (in English)"; MP "Tourism Management"; MP "Management for organizational excellence"; "Business, Technology and Innovation Management (in English)"; BP "Business Management and Entrepreneurship"; BP "Tourism"; BP "International Politics (in French)".

Dr. Hadjitchoneva has published author's materials in the "NBU Moodle" system for two courses - "Competitiveness and business development" and "Competitiveness and innovations" (in the part about competitiveness), covering the extremely broad focus of the candidate's scientific and applied interests.

For the period 2014-2022, Dr. Hadjitchoneva was the supervisor of 13 graduate students (bachelor's and master's) and reviewed over 40 theses in bachelor's and master's programs. She has participated in numerous commissions for state exams - more than 10.

#### 2. Working with Erasmus+ students and teaching in a foreign language

Dr. Hadjitchoneva has developed and conducts in NBU programs (including for Erasmus+ students) 6 independent classroom and two training courses in English - "Project Management", "Business context and HRM", "Strategies and policies for HR planning and management", "Innovation and creativity in organization", "Project: Project Development", "Project: Talent and workforce planning", "Seminar: The Role of the HR manager in the management of the business", "Economic policy of sustainability I" (in English for Erasmus



students), one independent course in French - "Finances publiques et politics budgetary" and one course in English in the joint programs with the University of Sheffield (York) - "Entrepreneurship & Innovation".

3. Grades from student surveys.

Along with numerous graduate guides and active collaboration with students, which show that Dr. Hadjitchoneva is a teacher liked and preferred by students, the quality of her work with students is also evidenced by the high average result of student satisfaction surveys from course and teacher – 4.14 out of a maximum of 5.00 for the last 10 semesters.

#### **IV. Administrative and public activities**

1. Participation in collective governing bodies of NBU.

Dr. Hadjitchoneva regularly and actively participates in the meetings of the Departmental Council of the Department of Administration and Management. For the period 2015-2019, he is also a member of the Program Council of the Department, and from 2020 he is a member of the Program Council and of the Department of "Political Sciences", program consultant of the Ministry of Business Administration, BP Business Management and Entrepreneurship. He regularly participates in various events for students and doctoral students. He also actively participates in the development of new courses (4, one of which is in French), the improvement of such courses and the initiation and improvement of programs (BP Business Management and Entrepreneurship MP Business Administration) at the NBU. He is a member of the scientific team of the scientific research project "Innovation models for increasing the competitiveness of agricultural holdings in Bulgaria", financed by the "Scientific Research" Fund of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

2. Public activity.

Dr. Hadjitchoneva's public activity is also active - she works actively with research teams in a number of countries and on different continents, including France, Chile, Algeria, Morocco, Cameroon, etc. It is a member of international and European research networks, e.g. of the International Association of French-speaking Economists AIELF, the European Research Network ERECO-PGV, in which he is also a board member from 2021. Research Associate at Bernardo University Center for Institutional Studies O'Higgins in Santiago de Chile, Chile, a member of the Editorial Board of the French-language international journal of economists RIELF and a reviewer for the journal Economic Thought. Participates in the organization of 3 scientific forums and one NBU summer school, takes a permanent and active part in various events of the NBU teacher training program and is an active participant in the activities of the Francophone Center of the NBU.

3. Attracting students to the program.

With her high professionalism and good teaching style, as well as her participation in various initiatives to attract prospective students, Dr. Hadjitchoneva contributes to the communication activities of the Administration and Management Department and the attraction and retention of students, and it should be noted and her active collaborative publication and project work with students.

#### **V. Personal impression of the candidate**

Dr. Hadjitchoneva is an ambitious young scientist who strictly observes professional scientific ethics and standards, shows an extremely collegial attitude and interest in the work of his colleagues and the development of the Administration and Management Department, as well as the NBU in general. As a scientist, the candidate's undoubted merits are that she is extremely active in terms of research and publication activities and mobilizes scientific potential to realize the scientific and practical goals she sets, works easily in scientific teams, as well as that she has experience in management and the implementation of scientific projects. Dr. Hadjitchoneva has a scientific intuition to discover new and important topics, to form innovative methodologies and to reach significant results convertible into practice. From working



together with her, I have found that the candidate is an accomplished scientist with great potential to expand his creative horizons.

## **VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the activities and achievements of the candidate**

Getting acquainted with the overall activity of Dr. Hadjitchoneva and especially with the attached publications allows a well-grounded positive picture of her characteristics as a candidate for associate professor at NBU. Without in any way diminishing the importance of the candidate's contributions and advantages, there are prerequisites for some recommendations for her future work as a researcher and teacher:

1. The prevailing analyzes of entrepreneurship and competitiveness in Bulgaria could very well be further developed with a more comprehensive comparative analysis internationally, as well as with an assessment of the success or failure factors of entrepreneurial activity, from which Bulgarian society and farm can have a serious benefit. Along with this, more attention could be paid to specific difficulties and problems facing Bulgaria in the way of the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem both in our country and in a wider European or even global plan.

2. After his successful habilitation, the candidate should direct his academic attention to expanding the theoretical scope of his research, deepening, summarizing and systematizing the achieved theoretical and, above all, scientific-applied results in order to search for ways to apply them in practice, which they definitely deserve it. The deepening and concretization of the research will lead to greater popularity of Dr. Hadjitchoneva in our country, as she works on the less researched topic of innovation as a determinant of entrepreneurial competitiveness, and her gradual inclusion as an expert in institutions and organizations, including business and the non-governmental sector, at discussion of these issues.

3. Given the academic position of "associate professor", it is expected that Dr. Hadjitchoneva will be the holder of academic disciplines in which there are publications. In this regard, the development and implementation of courses in the field of artificial intelligence in business management in the programs of the "Administration and Management" and "Economics" Departments, as well as general education courses for all specialties, will be of indisputable benefit to students and doctoral students. In addition, the candidate should focus her efforts on publishing textbooks and study aids on the current topics she researches, which will contribute to the future successful accreditation of the programs of the Department of Administration and Management.

4. With the aim of further academic development, as well as the practical application of the scientific results, it would be beneficial for Dr. Hadjitchoneva to participate more actively in research and applied projects, with the ambition to contribute to the successful inclusion of the department "Administration and management", and also of the NBU in a more general plan in similar projects.

## **Conclusion**

Senior Assistant Professor Juliana Hadjitchoneva, Ph.D. presents herself with a large number of scientific works with clearly expressed scientific contributions, successfully combining research, teaching and scientific-applied activities on the specific issues, which allows her to usefully connect theory with practice and fully educate students. Together with the teaching work she carries out, she can be defined as a specialist who fully meets and even exceeds the expectations and standards of the academic position of "associate professor" for which she is applying. Based on this, as well as Dr. Hadjitchoneva's active participation in the academic life of the New Bulgarian University, **I categorically state my positive assessment of the overall academic activity of the candidate and recommend to the respected Academic Council Senior Assistant Professor Juliana Bozhidarova Hadjitchoneva, Ph.D., to be elected as an Associate Professor in the field of higher education "3. Social, economic and legal sciences", professional field "3.7. Administration and management (Entrepreneurship, competitiveness, business development, artificial intelligence)".**

Sofia  
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Signature .....  
/Assoc. Prof. E. Marinov, Ph.D./