

STATEMENT

by Prof. Dr. Daniela Lubenova Koleva, SU 'St. Kliment Ohridski'
Professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies
for participation in a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in
professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies,
announced in the State Gazette no. 38/24.04.2026
with candidate Dr Milena Ivanova Angelova

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

Dr Milena Angelova has submitted the following materials for the competition for the academic position of associate professor in Professional Field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies: a habilitation thesis (the monograph *The Social Disease: Tuberculosis in the First Half of the 20th Century*), 20 articles, two of which appeared in a refereed and indexed journal, three studies in a refereed and indexed journal, and a chapter in an edited volume. Seven of the articles are in English, one in Russian. All submitted publications fall within the thematic area of the competition and are in accordance with the minimum national requirements, while significantly exceeding them across a number of indicators.

II. Research activities and results

1. Evaluation of the monographic work, creative performances or other publications corresponding to a monographic work, including an evaluation of the scientific and applied contributions of the author.

The monograph *The Social Disease: Tuberculosis in the First Half of the 20th Century*, is the first comprehensive, multifaceted study of tuberculosis as a social issue that mobilized discourses, policies, and institutions. The research is based on an impressive body of sources, including the archives of organisations and individuals, specialized and popular periodical publications, administrative programmes, etc., complemented by a wealth of visual material. A significant part of these sources fall in the focus of research attention for the first time.

Milena Angelova aims to clarify key issues regarding tuberculosis in its social dimensions: the development of expert knowledge and its intellectual and institutional contexts; the construction of the disease as a social problem; the forms of commitment to this problem and their dynamics. By framing her research questions in this way, the author transcends the disciplinary boundaries of the history of medicine and works productively at the intersection of social history, historical anthropology and medical anthropology. Her research programme thus aligns successfully with contemporary trends towards seeking interdisciplinary approaches and transnational contextualisations.

By focusing on the social, political, and cultural aspects of the chosen health issue – the “societal response to the disease: the policies and practices associated with tuberculosis as a ‘social disease’” (p. 9) – Angelova uses this case study to examine in

depth the formation of the modern Bulgarian state's biopolitics. A particularly valuable contribution is her elucidation of the links between the discursive construction of tuberculosis and evolving medical theories, as well as the correlation of this construction with broader intellectual and ideological currents, such as eugenics in the 1930s, productivism and the Sovietization of healthcare in the 1940s.

The originality of the monograph also lies in the skillful “play with scale” (Revel). The author works systematically at both national and local levels, while also incorporating transnational contextualizations wherever appropriate. Moreover, far from limiting herself to an institutional approach, Angelova pertinently prioritizes a “bottom-up” perspective, directing her attention toward local organizations and civic initiatives as well. In this regard, the final chapter is particularly valuable; here, the author employs a historical-anthropological approach to thicken the narrative by incorporating the micro-history of specific institutions alongside the experiences of patients and staff within them. Even when working with archival documents, Angelova offers an anthropological interpretation, achieving an empirically rich picture and a profound understanding of micro-processes without losing sight of their broader context. This is a methodological contribution that merits recognition.

Last but not least, I would like to highlight the monograph's high-quality academic style, accurate referencing, and – most importantly – its carefully considered and well-substantiated interpretations, which attest to the candidate's research maturity and rigour.

2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other submitted publications made after the appointment to the academic position of ‘chief assistant professor’.

The articles and studies submitted for the competition fall into several key thematic areas, reflecting the scope of the candidate's research interests. The first area is organically linked to Milena Angelova's dissertation project and focuses on agricultural modernization in Bulgaria. Here, I would like to highlight, as particularly innovative and significant, the articles dedicated to the modernizing role of knowledge production and dissemination, including the emergence of agrarian sociology and the transfer of methods and concepts within a regional Southeast European context.

The second group of articles addresses another aspect of modernization, namely, the contribution of civic organizations and foundations active in the healthcare sector during the interwar period: the Society for Combating Tuberculosis and the Union for Child Protection, as well as the American ones Rockefeller Foundation and the Near East Foundation. The focus on these non-institutional agents of modernization represents a significant contribution by the author, successfully continuing the research tradition initiated by Kristina Popova with *The National Child* and further developed through studies on voluntary and charitable organizations.

Closely related to these is the third group of articles, which focus on the history of medicine and healthcare – specifically, the fight against tuberculosis. Among them, I would highlight as particularly significant contributions the article “Social Construction and Ideologization of Disease: Tuberculosis in Bulgaria, 1944–1951” and the study “The

Last Crusade': International Contexts of the Fight Against Tuberculosis," which examines the globalization of anti-tuberculosis measures during the first half of the 20th century.

Another dimension should be added to the aforementioned thematic areas, one that reflects the candidate's methodological interests and achievements. Milena Angelova has mastered and successfully employed the biographical approach, as evidenced by her articles dedicated to specific figures: Dina Tvardishka, Dr. Yosif Lyubenov, Dr. Sergey Rostovtsev, and Valentina Nevskaya. Also noteworthy is her fruitful experience in anthropological fieldwork, which yielded the in-depth study and fascinating presentation of the case of Divlya village.

In all her publications, Angelova maintains her distinctive research style, characterized by a meticulous approach to primary sources – integrating them into the narrative through well-chosen quotations – as well as an attention to detail and a flair for visualization. At the same time, she consistently avoids “methodological nationalism” by contextualizing her case studies within the framework of transnational influences and transfers.

3. Citations/references.

Milena Angelova's works are widely cited in publications on the history of medicine – including authoritative titles such as *A Global History of Medicine* (Oxford University Press) – as well as in works on the history of social work and healthcare, women's history, historical anthropology, and other fields. As evidenced by the data presented for the 'Group D' indicators under the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor (in accordance with the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria), the points accumulated from citations far exceed the required minimum.

4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research or creative projects and the exploitation of the results.

Dr. Angelova has participated in a few research projects, including two international ones funded by the EC under the Seventh Framework Programme and Horizon 2020. Having participated together in one of them ('The European Leviathan: The Legacy of Post-War Medicine and the Common Good'), I can attest to her significant contribution.

In addition, I would like to highlight Milena Angelova's participation in a creative project with significant public resonance: the traveling exhibition on the resistance of Muslim women during the communist regime.

III. Teaching and academic activities

As a Senior Assistant Professor at the South-West University 'Neofit Rilski', Dr. Angelova has taught numerous courses, a significant number of which fall within the thematic scope of the current competition, such as Historical Anthropology, Agrarian Modernization and Rural Policies in Bulgaria, Institutions and Politics of Memory, Ethnic and Religious Communities in the Caucasus Region among others. With this teaching

experience, she is fully qualified to assume the position of Associate Professor at the New Bulgarian University (NBU), where she has already developed courses in Medical Anthropology and Social History. Her student evaluation score of 5.54 (Excellent) for the 2024–2025 academic year serves as further evidence of this.

IV. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)

I have known Milena Angelova since her doctoral studies at the South-West University, during which she actively participated in the Balkan Studies Seminar and the organization of the annual round tables. For two decades, I have followed her academic development with interest and satisfaction. I know her to be a profound researcher with a distinctive perspective of her own, and a gift for communication and teamwork.

V. Conclusion

Based on the above, I unhesitatingly recommend that the esteemed Academic Council of the New Bulgarian University elect Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Milena Ivanova Angelova to the position of Associate Professor in Professional Field 3.1 Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies. This appointment would represent not only a well-deserved and long-overdue advancement in her academic career but also a forward-looking decision regarding the University's staffing.

Date: 08.09.2026

Signature:

Daniela Koleva