

OPINION

by Prof. D.Sc. Martin Ivanov Ivanov, Sofia University *St. Kliment Ohridski*,

professional field: 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences,

on the scientific papers for participation in a competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, in the professional field: 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences for the needs of the New Bulgarian University, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Anthropology, announced in the State Gazette, issue 38 of April 24, 2026, with candidate Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Milena Ivanova Angelova

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

The candidate for the academic position of associate professor – Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Milena Angelova, is a graduate of the Southwestern University Neofit Rilski, where she works until 2024 as a lecturer in History of Bulgaria (New and Most Recent) at the Faculty of Law and History. Over the past 2 years, Dr. Angelova has continued her professional development at the New Bulgarian University. Since her early research, she has developed a lasting interest in modernization policies, relations between the state and local communities, the role of expert knowledge and social engineering in the 20th century. Over the past ten years, these topics have been expanded to include the problems of modernization of the Bulgarian village, public health, memory policies, and recently - the tensions between official heroism and real human experiences within the communist regime. Milena Angelova participated in the competition with one monograph, one collective monograph, three studies and an impressive number of 20 articles. All of them with undisputed authorship and without proven plagiarism or unreliability in the scientific data presented in the scientific works. The presented scientific production not only meets, but significantly exceeds the minimum requirements for scientific and teaching activities for the field of higher education social sciences, professional field: 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences from the ZRASRB and from the Regulation on the development of the academic staff of NBU and Appendix 2. Minimum national requirements and requirements of NBU, which candidates must meet to acquire a scientific degree and to occupy the academic positions of chief assistant professor, associate professor

and professor. With a required minimum number of 570 points, the candidate has collected and presented 1,305 points - almost three times more than necessary for the successful conduct of the procedure.

For example, in the group of indicators D (published monograph, which is not presented as a main habilitation work; articles, studies and reports published in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information and in non-refereed journals with scientific review or published in edited collective volumes), Senior Assistant Professor M. Angelova has 470 points out of the required 200 points or - more than twice as much. In the group of indicators D (citations) the points are 380 out of the required 50 - 7.6 times more, and in indicators E (leadership or participation in national and international scientific or educational projects) - 70 with the required 0 points. It should be noted that some of her publications are in foreign languages, which makes her recognizable, read and cited not only in Bulgaria.

II. Research (creative) activity and results

As her main habilitation work, Dr. Angelova presents the monograph: *The Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Bulgaria in the First Half of the 20th Century*. Blagoevgrad, University Publishing House Neofit Rilski, 2021. 346 p., ISBN 978-954-00-02514. The book is innovative in many directions. First of all, it directs its research quest not only to a topic, but also to an entire scientific direction almost completely neglected by Bulgarian historiography until now. Diseases, mortality and social medicine are not particularly to the taste of our, largely conservative, college, which is why we know almost nothing about these important aspects of the lives of previous generations. Second, the gaping historiographic gap is filled extremely skillfully by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Milena Angelova, following the already established tracks in foreign literature. And thirdly, the interdisciplinary approach she has chosen combines social history, historical anthropology and the history of medicine. This allows her to paint a multi-layered picture that goes far beyond the traditional factual framework. Stepping onto a practically virgin field, the author searches for, analyzes and introduces into scientific circulation a significant amount of archival and visual material related to the main players and the policies they followed to combat tuberculosis until the end of the 1940s.

The thematic circle of the monograph can also include a series of studies and articles through which the chronological scope of the topic has been expanded (until the mid-1950s), and its individual aspects (for example: international comparisons, the scientific and social construction of the disease) have been significantly condensed. In them, Milena Angelova analyzes the switch from a, let's call it a global or at

least European model, to the Semashko model introduced to our country after 1944, Sovietizing Bulgarian healthcare, including the fight against tuberculosis. We could also include her studies on international philanthropic and expert networks and the role of the Rockefeller Foundation and the American Near East Foundation for the Fight against Malaria in the 1920s and 1930s in the same main line of research. Dr. Angelova's in-depth work in archives across the country gave her the chance to come across two real research finds – the memoirs and other self-documents of two provincial doctors – in Kyustendil and Mastanli (present-day Momchilgrad). They provide a unique opportunity to peer beneath the macro picture and follow the real course of the processes in depth. That is why I often use these two articles by M. Angelova in my work with my students within the framework of the elective course Village with Decreasing Functions in the Department of Sociology of Sofia University St. Kl. Ohridski.

Enriching Dr. Angelova's thematic arsenal does not mean that she loses sight of other scientific fields in which she has made significant academic contributions for decades. I will recall her doctoral dissertation Model Village, published later as a monograph, and her ongoing work on the modernization of the Bulgarian village. A topic that is particularly valuable and close to my own scientific interests. In recent years, M. Angelova has focused her main research in this field on microhistories of individual villages, individuals and cases with a certain contribution.

Along with these two parallel and largely interconnected scientific streams, Senior Assistant Professor Angelova also maintains a number of other interests in her focus – on the culture of memory and the visual modes of presenting the past (e.g. her article on the Pleven Epic Panorama). Here I would also include M. Angelova's recent research on the repression of Muslim women and the heroization of "active fighters against fascism and capitalism". On the latter topic, M. Angelova has already delivered several very interesting reports at scientific conferences, some of which I attended personally, and at the same time she is completing a new monographic work.

The candidate's academic career has been significantly influenced by her specializations in Austria, Germany, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, etc., carried out over the years, as well as by her participation in a number of international scientific projects, including under the Horizon 2020 program. She has participated as a team member in two national and two international projects. I must also mention the inclusion of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Milena Angelova in scientific networks, editorial boards and academic organizations. Over a period of over 20 years, she has been one of the main driving forces behind the journal Balkanistic Forum and, as a member of the Editorial Board, author of thematic issues and individual articles, has made a significant contribution to its indexing in SCOPUS, Web of Science, ERIH

PLUS and MIAR. Until recently, the journal was among the most respected and highly regarded scientific publications, as evidenced by its high impact factor and ranking in Q1 of SCOPUS. Since 2025, M. Angelova has become a member of the editorial board of the new journal *Balkanistic Worlds*. In parallel, she is a member of the editorial boards of two foreign journals - the Turkish *Tobider* and the Ukrainian *Consensus*.

III. Educational and teaching activities

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Milena Angelova has a rich teaching career behind her, which began in 2005 at the South-West University Neofit Rilski. Over the years, she has developed and taught 17 courses on historical anthropology, health policies, agrarian modernization, charity, memory policies, women and gender studies, local self-government, oral history, etc. She has provided scientific supervision to 11 successfully graduated graduates from the master's and bachelor's programs of the South-West University.

Since 2024, Dr. Angelova has been a lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Anthropology of the New Bulgarian University. Here she develops and leads four specialized and general education lecture courses on civic knowledge and skills, cultural heritage, medical anthropology and political anthropology. She is a member of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Arts.

IV. Personal impressions of the candidate

I have known Dr. Milena Angelova and have been following her scientific work for over two decades. I have always respected her dedication - both in scientific research and in interpersonal, collegial relationships. I have used her publications in my exercises and lecture courses as important for describing and understanding various aspects of Bulgaria's recent past. Both in terms of its quantity and quality, her scientific output has long exceeded the minimum requirements for holding the academic position of associate professor and it is a pity that this competition is only now being held. Of course, neither the candidate Dr. Angelova nor the New Bulgarian University is to blame for this, but it is a bad example of (in)academic intolerance in some Bulgarian universities.

V. Conclusion

The entire scientific and teaching activity of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Milena Ivanova Angelova testifies to her rich general historical training and competence, to her precise and analytical attitude towards documents and facts from the past, to the thoroughness and argumentation of the conclusions and assessments made and the ability to present them to an audience.

Taking into account all of the above, I will confidently vote for Dr. Angelova to be elected to the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences for the needs of the New Bulgarian University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Anthropology and I recommend that she be admitted to election and approved by the Academic Council of NBU.

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